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ABSTRACT

Educators and parents have begun to focus on the environment in which education takes place as well as on the nature of the education that children receive. Children learn most effectively when they feel safe and secure, and when they are free from fear. Behaviors such as bullying and sexual harassment that in the past were assumed to be part of life are today recognized as intimidating and, in some circumstances, illegal behavior. Participants at this Safe Schools Symposium, focused on creating safe school environments, addressed three questions: Is the elimination of violence and aggression in schools a realistic goal? Who should get information about young offenders and high-risk youth and for what purpose? How do we create safe school environments? This document provides background information about safe schools and violence in schools. The document is composed of three sections: Creating Safe Schools; Policy Leadership; and What Can I Do? Each section begins with background information and ends with a summary of discussions from the Symposium. Appendices are: a checklist that school staff can use to assess the environment in their own school; a copy of the Symposium agenda; and a list of boards of education and other organizations sending representatives. (Author)

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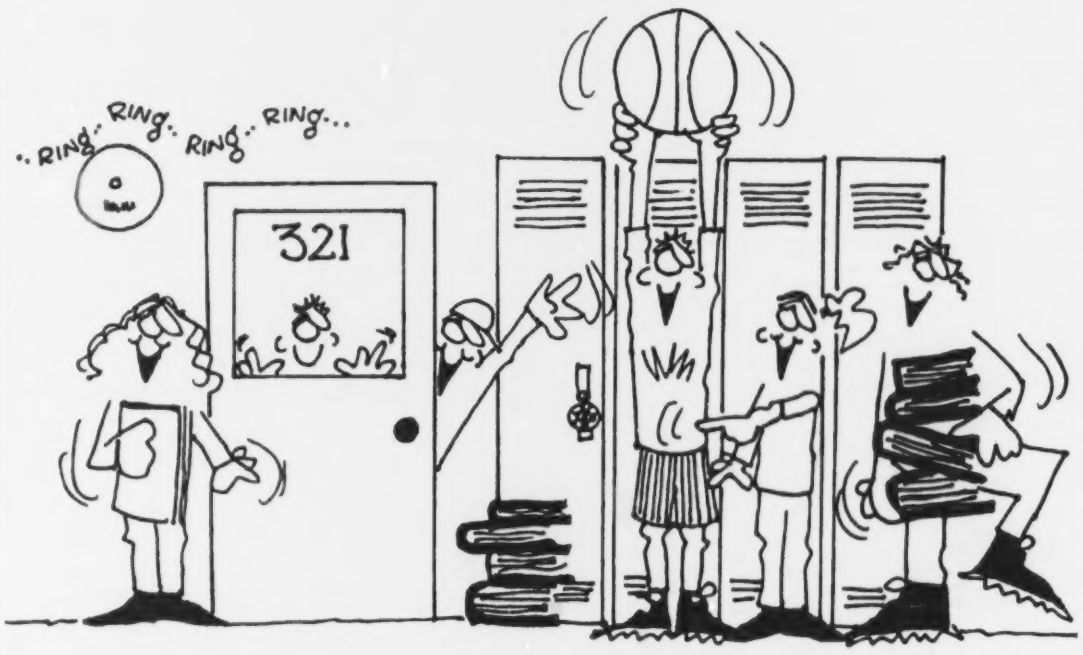
One Incident is Too Many

Policy Guidelines for Safe Schools in Saskatchewan



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One Incident is Too Many

Policy Guidelines for Safe Schools in Saskatchewan

A Summary of
Saskatchewan School Trustees Association
Safe Schools Symposium

September 19, 1994
Travelodge Hotel, Saskatoon

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Introduction

In recent years, educators and parents have begun to focus on the environment in which education takes place as well as on the nature of the education that children receive. It is recognized that children learn most effectively when they feel safe and secure, and when they are free from fear – when they learn in a safe school environment. It is unclear whether there is more school violence today than in the past. What is clear is that social attitudes are changing. Behaviours such as bullying and sexual harassment that in the past were assumed to be part of life are today recognized as intimidating and, in some circumstances, illegal behaviour.

The Saskatchewan School Trustees Association's Safe Schools Symposium held September 19, 1994 at the Travelodge Hotel in Saskatoon focused on creating safe school environments. Participants addressed three important questions:

- Is the elimination of violence and aggression in schools a realistic goal?
- Who should get information about young offenders and high-risk youth? For what purpose?
- How do we create safe school environments?

The Symposium also gave participants an opportunity to share information about safe schools activities that are going on throughout the province.

This document provides background information about safe schools and violence in schools. It summarizes the comments and discussions that took place at the Symposium and provides brief descriptions of Saskatchewan safe schools activities.

This document has three sections:

- Creating Safe Schools
- Policy Leadership
- What Can I Do?

Each section of this document begins with background information and ends with a summary of discussions at the Symposium.

The document concludes with a checklist (Appendix A) that school staff can use to assess the environment in their own school.

A copy of the Symposium agenda appears in Appendix B. A list of boards of education and other organizations sending representatives appears in Appendix C.

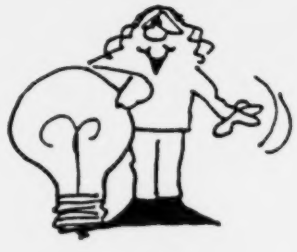
Part I: Creating Safe Schools

Why the Emphasis on Safe Schools?

In the last few years, many schools and school divisions have focussed on school safety – on ensuring that schools are places where all students and staff feel physically and psychologically safe.

The reason for this emphasis on safe schools has as much to do with changing social attitudes as with increases in aggressive or violent behaviour. Once bullying might have been dismissed as "fooling around". Today it is recognized for what it is – threatening and intimidating behaviour. Once sexual harassment was seen as "kids being kids". Today it is viewed as unacceptable and illegal behaviour.

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



Is the elimination of aggressive and violent behaviour a realistic goal?

Society's attitudes about what constitutes violent behaviour are changing as well. Today, violence is viewed as a continuum that includes such things as vandalism, verbal slurs and threats, as well as physical acts of violence and assault with a weapon (British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 1993). Violence includes bullying, sexual harassment and intimidation, all of which may be psychological rather than physical acts.

The Wellington (Guelph, Ontario) County Board of Education offers the following definition:

> *A violent activity is characterized by verbal or written threats; physical, emotional, sexual abuse/harassment; or racial harassment by an individual or group of individuals which has the effect of impairing or might have the effect of impairing the health and welfare of any students or staff member* (Wellington County Board of Education, 1991).

The current emphasis on safe schools is intended to prevent violent activity. It is intended to provide guidance for teachers and students so that they can work toward a violence-free school environment – an environment in which students are free to learn and teachers are free to teach. The emphasis is on prevention as well as on intervention.

School policies must do more than minimize aggressive or violent behaviour. The goal is to develop students' character and sense of community (What is Character Education?, 1994).

What is Violent Activity?

Some examples of violent activity include:

Bullying

Louise, a grade seven student, hates to go to school. Two other girls in her class have been making her life hell for a long time. Almost every day they follow her at recess and make fun of the way she looks. Several times they have marked up her coat and running shoes with felt pens. They rip up her school books and assignments whenever they can get hold of them. Three times they have snuck up behind her and cut chunks out of her hair.

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT

Have violent incidents occurred in your school or school division? How did those incidents make you feel? What did you do when they happened?

Student Violence Against Teachers

Mrs. Lewchuk, a grade four teacher, tells Mark, one of her students, to pick up the paper that he dropped on the floor. Mark swears at Mrs. Lewchuk using very violent language and then kicks her on the ankle.

Student Violence Against Other Students

There's a five-minute break between classes at Thurburg Collegiate and many students are getting books from their lockers. Seemingly without provocation, George, a grade 11 student runs across the hall, grabs Robert, a grade 10 student, slams him against his locker and punches him in the stomach.

Teacher Violence Against Students

Louise and Margaret, two grade six students, are giggling and whispering and definitely not paying attention to their work. Miss Belrose, their teacher, comes along and pulls Margaret's long hair. The pull is strong enough to snap Margaret's head back sharply and to bring tears to her eyes. She wipes her eyes quickly and looks at her books.

Racism

Greg is a Black grade 9 student. One day at noon hour a group of other students make a point of standing close to him and making jokes about a new soap that is guaranteed to "wash the black away". Greg pretends he doesn't hear and walks

away, but a couple of the students follow him and continue to make comments about "soap that will make your skin white as snow".

Sexual Harassment

A group of male students are standing near the entrance of Riverview High School. As female students pass by, the male students make very explicit comments about specific aspects of their bodies in loud voices that can be heard by all. Occasionally, the male students call out a number from 1 to 10 – their "rating" for a particular female. When Ms. Stevens, a younger female teacher, goes by, the male students make similar comments but in lower voices so that only parts of their comments can be heard.

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT

Is there a need for a safe schools policy in your school or school division? Why or why not?

How Much Violence is There?

> *At present, concern about violence in schools is high. An overwhelming majority of adults – 93% – responding to an Environics Research poll conducted in April 1993 say violence against staff and students in elementary and secondary schools is a concern. Seventy per cent report they are "very" concerned; 23% that they are "somewhat" concerned about violence in schools. In fact, when ranking educational issues of concern, the poll shows violence is tops – greater than concern about academic standards.* (91% Favour Testing, 1993)

A 1990 public opinion survey conducted on behalf of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association found that 15% of the public felt that lack of discipline among students was the biggest problem faced by schools today (Canwest Opinion, 1990).

A survey released by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation in May 1994 indicated that 40% of teachers surveyed had experienced at least one incident of abuse since September 1992 (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 1994). This survey is described in more detail in sidebar on the next page.

There are no hard data to indicate whether violence is increasing in Canadian schools, (91% Favour Testing, 1993) but teachers report several trends that cause concern. These trends include:

- more aggressive behaviour among younger children. Children as young as age five are involved in incidents such as biting, kicking, or hitting teachers or other children, as well as using extremely violent language (A Dialogue on ..., 1993; British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 1993; MacDougall, 1993).

- more girls involved in aggressive acts (British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 1993).

- increasing amounts of disruptive behaviour and aggression in classrooms (A Dialogue on ..., 1993).

Studies conducted by teachers' associations in British Columbia, Manitoba and Nova Scotia showed that:

- There were more incidents of abusive behaviour than anticipated.

- There is mounting concern among teachers over the increase in verbal and physical assaults in schools.

- The age of students who exhibit violent behaviour is dropping – abusive behaviour previously seen mainly in older students is now exhibited by children in the early grades.

IN SASKATCHEWAN

In October and November of 1993, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation conducted a survey of teachers to assess the extent to which teachers have been subjected to sexual, physical, emotional or verbal abuse as a result of their professional duties (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 1994). Of teachers responding to the survey, 40% reported experiencing at least one incident of abuse during the past year. Another 26% reported experiencing some type of abuse in the time before this. The most common type of abuse reported was verbal abuse, such as personal insults or name calling, either spoken or through telephone calls, letters or notes. Other types of non-physical abuse such as rude gestures and slanderous statements were also common.

Damage to property was reported by 12% of teachers over the past year, with 9% experiencing it more than once.

Abuse involving physical contact against themselves was reported by 9% of teachers, with 6% experiencing it more than once. Physical abuse against their families was reported by 2% of teachers and threats of violence by 7%.

The source of abuse was mainly students taught by the teacher (29%), followed by other students (18%) and students' parents (15%).

- Verbal abuse is the most common form: teachers report they are targets of verbal abuse more often – by far – than physical abuse.

- Survey results prompted a call for action by the associations (MacDougall, 1993).

It is clear that more youth are being charged with violent crimes.

> *The number of young Canadians aged 12 to 17 charged with violent crimes more than doubled between 1986 and 1991, reports Statistics Canada in numbers released in October 1992. In 1986, the number of juveniles charged was 9,300; in 1991, violent offense charges were laid against 18,800 youths. This jump represents an eye-opening 102% increase in a five-year period. It is unclear how much of this percentage reflects an increase in reporting* (Mathews, Ryan & Banner, 1992).

Some experts caution us to be careful when assessing the amount of violence in Canadian schools and in determining whether violence is increasing. They note that the overwhelmingly American media feeds and reinforces the idea that youth violence is increasing and that local newspapers confirm such sentiments with front-page coverage of any untoward incident. We should not assume that Canadian schools are going the way of American ones (West, 1993).

Indeed, information provided by Statistics Canada (Gartner & Doob, 1994) indicate that in Canada as a whole, overall rates of victimization have either remained the same or decreased compared with five years earlier. Interestingly, self-reported victimization has not increased, but police-reported statistics on crime have generally indicated increases during the past five years. This apparent discrepancy between actual and reported crime is probably due, in part, to increased recognition by the public of certain acts as crimes (e.g., spousal assault and school violence) and, therefore, to the willingness of victims and witnesses to report such events and of police to record them.

Despite all of this statistical information, no one really knows how much violence there is in schools. Board members don't know because they don't have daily contact with the school; teachers don't know because students often don't report violent incidents; students themselves don't know because they base their opinion on their own experiences, not on the experiences of all students. Appendix A which concludes this document provides a simple survey that can be used with the teachers and students in your school. It will help you assess the amount of violence in your school.

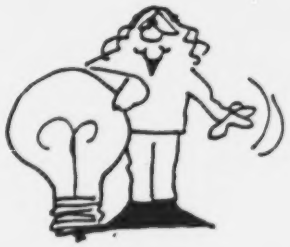
What Causes Youth Aggression and Violence?

Societal Influences

Some writers on the topic of youth aggression and violence say that any discussion of the causes of violence must begin with an examination of the nature of our society itself.

They point out that our social organization systematically harms large groups of people such as ethnic and racial minorities, women, working class people, and the young (West, 1993) because it discriminates against them and leaves them economically and socially powerless and sometimes victims of physical violence. They note that violence in our society is often defined as the illegitimate use of force; that certain types of violence are considered legitimate because they are embodied in the legal system, the police, and the military. (West, 1993) Thus violence is an integral part of our society; students who behave violently are simply reflecting society as a whole.

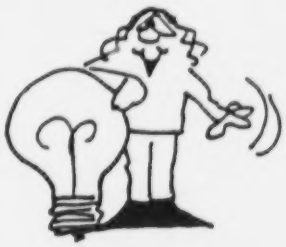
TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



Do you agree that violence is built into our society and that students who behave violently are just reflecting society as a whole?

Can you think of situations that would support this point of view? Situations that would tend to prove it wrong?

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



Keep a notebook at your side during a week of television and video watching and record the number of:

- *murders*
- *physical fights*
- *incidents of verbal abuse (swearing, name-calling)*
- *situations in which force is used to solve a problem*
- *incidents of sexual harassment*

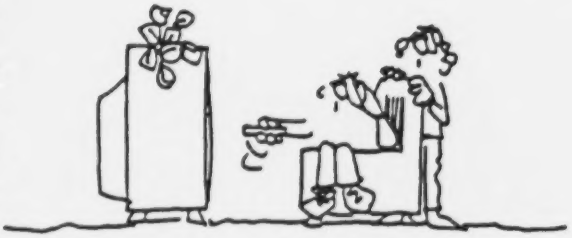
that you see. Were you surprised at the number? Do you agree that the media presents violence as a normal and acceptable part of daily life?

Some writers suggest that the nature of the school system also rationalizes the use of violence. The Eurocentric nature of the curriculum and teaching practices systematically exclude the experiences and viewpoints of minority students (Auger, 1993; Walcott and Dei, 1993) and show by example that the group with the most power has the right to oppress others.

Children and adolescents in schools are subject to many constraints and rules that are generated by adults. These rules apply both to academic matters such as age-grade placement and required courses, and to personal matters such as dress and hairstyles. The question then becomes, "Do these constraints protect young people or are they power used for its own sake?" (Brown, 1993).

Other factors often cited as contributing to violence and aggression include:

- **the media's portrayal of violence** – Many television programs and movies depict violence as the solution to stressful situations and as a normal part of daily life. Children who see many programs of this type may be unable to distinguish between real-life and fiction and may copy the role models they see on television (British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 1993; Does TV Violence..., 1992; How Safe are our Schools?, 1991).

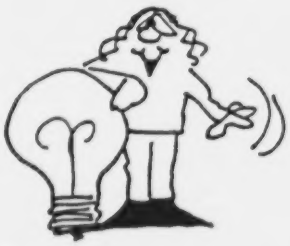


- **family violence** – Children who witness violence in their homes or are the victims of violence themselves are apt to assume that violent behaviour is normal behaviour and imitate the way that their parents behave (British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 1993).

- **economic conditions** – unemployment and poverty create tremendous stresses for families. In a world that prizes the consumer goods they cannot afford, young people may turn to illegal means to get material things (British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 1993). In addition, "a gap appears to be growing between the middle class and a growing underclass made up of unemployed people and workers with low-paying jobs." With no hope for the future and no sense that their lives will ever be different, young people can become bitter (Theilheimer, 1992).

- **racism and sexism** – Women and girls and members of racial minority groups are often discriminated against in our society. Violence against these groups is discrimination carried to an extreme. In some people's eyes, the fact that these groups have a lower economic status in society and less power makes it acceptable to victimize them. (Ontario Secondary School Students' Association, 1992)

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



How much violence is too much? Should a school strive to be completely violence free or are a certain number of violent incidents per year acceptable? Should there be different standards for different types of violence? Should there be zero tolerance for physical violence but some tolerance for sexual harassment and verbal abuse? Is violence against teachers more serious than violence against students?

Issues related to the Young Offenders' Act are closely linked to concerns about youth aggression and violence. The Act is seen by many as protecting the repeat violent offender and sheltering violent youth so that they are not required to take responsibility for their actions (British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 1993). Although the Act is not necessarily seen as something that contributes to youth violence; it is often seen by many as something that does little or nothing to prevent it.

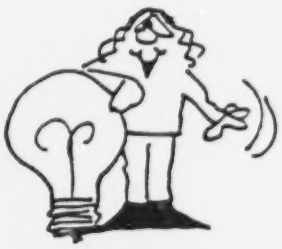
Family Influences

Some young people are much more prone to violence than others. Their violent or antisocial behaviour at school may put them at risk for endangering their own or others' personal safety or preventing themselves or other students from learning.

Violent behaviour exhibited by these youth may include physical violence such as fighting, pushing, shoving, slapping, assault, assault with a weapon or sexual assault. It may also include other types of violence such as verbal assault (yelling, swearing, violent outbursts), bullying (which may or may not include physical violence) and sexual harassment.

The children and youth who exhibit this type of behaviour are subject to the same societal influences as other youth. In addition, forces within their home may convey the message that violence is an acceptable way of dealing with problems.

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



Think about the discipline practices in your school. To what extent do they reinforce the antisocial behaviours that many high-risk youth demonstrate? To what extent do they provide positive models for high-risk youth?

There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that, in most cases, violent or antisocial behaviour is learned (Natale, 1994; Shamsie & Hluchy, 1991; Tierney et al, 1993; Walker, 1993).

> *Parents and other caretakers aren't the only sources of children's learning, but they are the people children learn from first – and the lessons they provide have tremendous impact. By not monitoring children's behavior, by not showing children how to replace aggression with constructive behavior, parents can send an indirect, unintended message: It's OK to use aggressive behavior to get what you want. The lessons can be far more forthright, too. If parents regularly use extremely aggressive behavior – fighting or screaming, for instance – to get what they want, a child is likely to pick up that behavior. Sometimes, too, the child is the target of the aggression – and studies have shown a clear link between being abused as a child and being violent later in life* (Natale, 1994).

To understand the dynamics of aggression more fully, one must look at patterns that are common to many families of hyperaggressive children. This begins with the realization that aggression itself is an interactive event. Typically, aggressive interchanges in families occur between two individuals who are each simultaneously having an effect on the other's behaviour (Patterson, 1983). In many other families, interactions become dominated by frequent aversive behaviors, such as yelling, nagging, threatening statements, and physical abuse. The child's own aversive behaviors then become "coercive" in nature when the targets (commonly his or her parents) begin either to comply with the child's demands to avoid conflict or to escalate their own use of harsh responses. In other words, aggression begets aggression (Tierney et al, 1993).

Children who exhibit violent behaviour are more likely to be punished harshly and inconsistently by their parents. Parents often do not model or teach socially acceptable forms of behaviour to their children and may ignore antisocial acts committed by the child in the parents' presence, thus communicating a message of legitimacy (Tierney et al, 1993; Walker, 1993). Children who grow up in families where there is constant fighting, verbal abuse and abuse of power learn to use aggression as a means to achieve goals (Ewashen et al, 1993; Shamsie & Hluchy, 1991).

In school, high-risk children often use maladaptive behaviours (such as defiance, verbal and physical aggression, and stealing) that are difficult for both teachers and fellow students to deal with. The peer relationships of high-risk children and youth are often problematic. They often use coercive tactics such as teasing and verbal and physical abuse to force the submission of others, but react very angrily to similar treatment by peers (Walker, 1993).

The Day Treatment Program (social skills training) is offered in a number of schools in Saskatchewan. Within the Northern Lakes School Division, the Day Treatment Program has been very successful in helping to create school harmony. Children are taught social skills through direct instruction, role plays, and modelling. A token economy is used in the initial stages of the program. There is an emphasis on helping students to transfer the skills they learn from this program to the classroom and to everyday situations.

Initially the program was offered to K-6 students but now it has expanded to include junior high students as well. Last year a pull-out model was used and only children who were at risk for violent or disruptive behaviour participated. However, it was found that the program is more effective if the whole class participates. Two schools are now offering the program on a school-wide basis.

The Day Treatment Program is delivered at the schools by staff who are trained through Child and Youth Services. Parenting classes are an integral part of the program. The leaders of the parenting classes are also trained by Child and Youth Services and are funded for a two-month program by Social Services.

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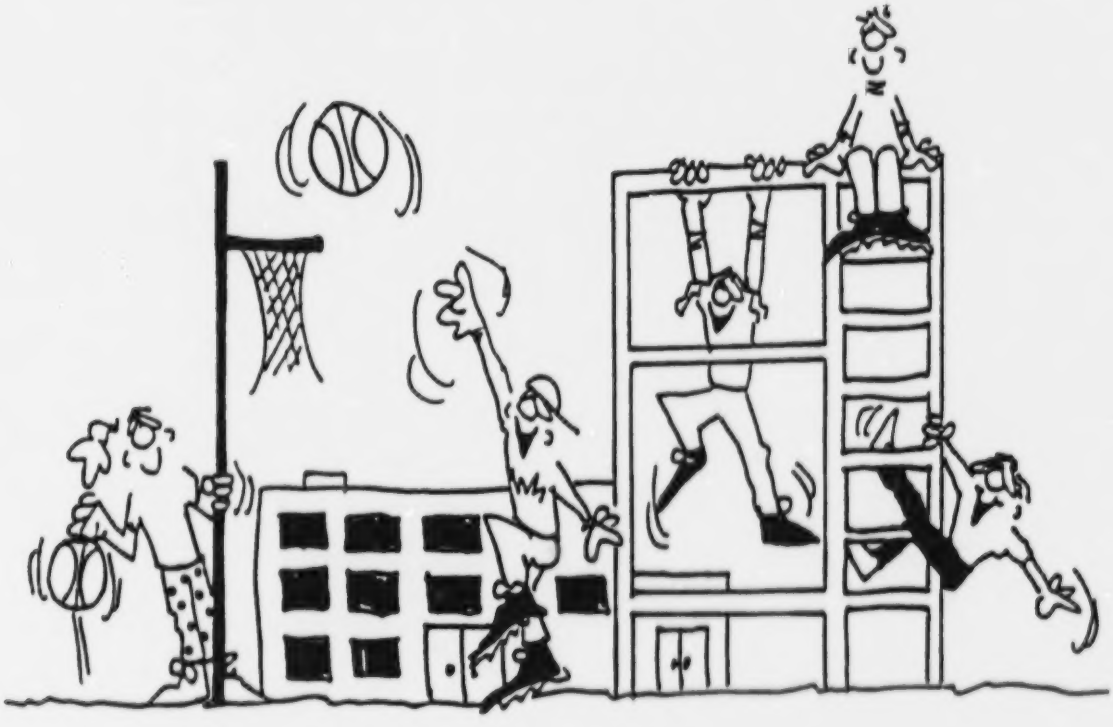
The majority of high-risk youth are either behind or doing poorly in their school work and may have a long history of academic failure.

Many of these young people are involved with the law, as violating the basic rights of others is the basis for many actions that society considers criminal. It is to society's advantage to help these young people. The economic costs of incarcerating them is high and the pain and suffering of their families and victims is great. There is also the waste of a young person's life to consider (Shamsie & Hluchy, 1991).

In schools, the challenge is to deal with these high-risk youngsters in ways that minimize their disruptive influence on the rest of the school and allow the youngsters themselves to benefit from their educational experience.

Because the behaviour patterns of high-risk youth develop out of their earliest childhood experiences, violent and antisocial behaviour patterns often appear very early (Shamsie & Hluchy, 1991). Most experts agree that the earlier that intervention procedures begin, the better. Some (Kazdin, 1985) suggest that unless the antisocial behaviour pattern has been affected significantly by age nine, the behaviour should be considered chronic. Others are more optimistic and believe that the behaviour of teenagers can be changed.



What are the Effects of Youth Violence?

It has been noted that aggressive or violent behaviour is perpetuated by a small number of students (A Dialogue on ..., 1993; It's a Jungle ..., 1993; Theilheimer, 1992) but that those students have a large impact on others around them. Just one troublemaker can disrupt learning for everyone in a class (It's a Jungle ..., 1993). Children who are the victims of bullies usually suffer other side effects such as a drop in grades, an increase in anxiety, or a loss of friends and social life. In some cases, the victims of bullies have become suicidal (Hazler, Hoover & Oliver, 1992; Wilson, 1992). Sexual harassment of female students "creates a hostile environment, transforming school into an intimidating, frightening and offensive place." This atmosphere interferes with a student's academic performance, sense of self, enjoyment or interest in school, peer relationships and general well-being (Openly Addressing ..., 1993).

From the Symposium

Issue #1: Is the elimination of aggression and violence in schools a realistic goal?

The first issue that participants at the Safe Schools Symposium held September 19, 1994 addressed was "Is the elimination of aggression and violence in schools a realistic goal?"

Symposium participants began their discussions on this issue by examining the nature of aggression and violence. They agreed that violence is a societal problem, not just a school problem. Violence exists in homes, on the streets and in the media. When violence occurs in schools, it is a reflection of events taking place beyond the school doors. Participants agreed that the elimination of violence and aggression in schools is a goal to strive towards – a goal worthy of our best efforts. Even if we never totally achieve this goal, we must never lose sight of the vision of a violence-free school.

Participants talked about strategies that could be used to achieve the goal of a violence-free school. They felt that just as the problem extends far beyond the school, so must the solution. Parents, community organizations, children and families must be involved in discussions about violence. These discussions must focus both on eliminating violence in society as a whole and on specific programs to reduce violence in a single school, school division or community.

Participants emphasized prevention. They said that it is better to create a climate in which violence does not occur than to intervene in violent incidents and handle the fallout from such incidents.

Other points made during the discussion about eliminating violence and aggression include:

- All students have a right to an education, but not all students have a right to attend a particular program or a particular school. For example, if a student is particularly disruptive in the regular classroom, the school has the right to move that student into a special program or to purchase services from another school division that has a more suitable program.

- The Education Act is an educational administrator's best friend. It provides for the removal or alternate placement of extremely violent or disruptive students. Too few administrators and boards fully understand the provisions of the Act.

- In any society the rights of the individual have to be balanced against the rights of the majority. In our society the rights of a single student shouldn't override the rights of the majority of students. In practical terms, this means that a single violent or disruptive student shouldn't be allowed to interfere with the education of a whole classroom or school full of children.

- Extreme forms of violence such as assault with fists or weapons are easy to recognize. But both students and teachers may have difficulty recognizing and identifying as wrong some of the more subtle forms of violence such as bullying, sexual harassment or verbal abuse. Education about violence should begin by giving students and staff the knowledge they need to identify and name violent acts.

- The concept of zero tolerance should apply to behaviour, not to students. This is different from the concept of zero tolerance that exists in Eastern Canada, where a single violent act can result in a student's permanent expulsion.

- Schools should be using the programs that are available and have been proven successful. These programs include peer mediation programs (described on page 47 of this report) and day treatment programs (described on page 10 of this report). Perhaps some provincial guidelines for the establishment of these types of programs are needed.

- Programs for victims and potential victims are needed. Students need to learn how to avoid becoming victims. Individuals who are victimized need various types of support. The focus shouldn't always be on the offender.

- There must be support when action is taken to stop violence. Some teachers report that they are reluctant to take action because they don't feel that the principal will support them; principals say the same thing about the board of education. Boards of education say that they are reluctant to take action because they feel that past precedents suggest they will lose any court case they might become involved in.

Part II: Policy Leadership

Why a Safe Schools Policy?

The goals of education for Saskatchewan begin with the following statement:

> *The goals of education recognize the inherent worth and value of each individual. Education, then, should develop the potential of each person to the fullest extent.*

All individuals develop to their fullest extent when they are in an environment where they feel physically and psychologically safe. Development and implementation of a safe schools policy is an important step toward creating such an environment.

All schools and school divisions can benefit from having a safe schools policy including those that have had few or no violent incidents. A safe schools policy is a public commitment that the school wants to create the best possible learning environment.

A safe schools policy tells the world clearly and unequivocally that violent incidents of all types are wrong and won't be tolerated. It indicates that the board of education recognizes that such incidents conflict with the goal of developing all students to their maximum potential. A policy is a statement of philosophy and belief as well as direction for action.

The objective of the educational system is to educate students, staff and members of the public. A safe schools policy is an important educational tool because it makes people aware of the many different forms that violence can take, of the harmful effects of violence and provides a basis for a whole range of educational responses to violent incidents.

The process of developing a policy encourages community dialogue about safe schools issues and builds understanding and commitment. It also promotes integrated school-based services. During the process of policy development school officials will have many opportunities to interact with community organizations such as churches and friendship centres and with other agencies concerned with violent behaviour such as the provincial departments of Justice and Social Services.

A safe schools policy also may:

- institutionalize effective practices;
- legitimate, clarify and/or reaffirm existing practices;
- focus attention on an existing issue or problem; and/or,
- indicate to the community that there will be a significant change in the way that the board of education and individual schools handle violent incidents.

Policy Considerations

Before boards of education begin developing safe schools policies, they may wish to discuss a number of issues among themselves and with the community.

These issues include:

- the requirements of The Education Act;
- the requirements of The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code;
- suspension;
- zero tolerance; and,
- the characteristics of an effective safe schools policy.

Each of these issues is described in more detail in the sections that follow.

The Education Act

Section 144(1) of The Education Act gives all children the right to an education.

> *144. (1) Notwithstanding anything in The Age of Majority Act, and except as otherwise provided in this Act, every person between the ages of six and twenty-one years shall have the right to attend school in the division in which he or his parents or guardian are residents, and to receive instruction appropriate to his age and level of educational achievement in courses of instruction approved by the board of education in the school or schools of the division or, subject to the stated policies, requirements and conditions of the board, in schools or institutions outside the division with which arrangements have been made by the board to provide certain services to pupils of the division.*

Section 143 further reinforces this right.

> *143. (1) Subject to sections 153, 154 and 156, no teacher, trustee, director, or other school official shall in any way deprive, or attempt to deprive, a pupil of access to, or the advantage of, the educational services approved and provided by the board of education or the conseil scolaire.*

Although The Education Act clearly states that all children have the right to an education, it also sets out certain conditions under which an individual may lose that right.

Section 227. (i) of The Education Act states that teachers shall:

> *(i) exclude any pupil from the class for overt opposition to the teacher's authority or other gross misconduct and, by the conclusion of that day, report in writing to the principal the circumstances of that exclusion;*

Section 227. (i) is meant to apply to emergency situations – a fight in the classroom or a student who aggressively confronts a teacher, for example. It is not meant to be applied on a routine basis, to exclude certain troublesome students from the classroom.

Section 153 of The Education Act sets out the conditions under which a student may be suspended from school. Section 154 addresses expulsion. It clearly states that students may be expelled for a period greater than one year when an investigation concludes that such an expulsion is justified.

It is important to note that suspensions must be initiated by the principal of a school. The board of education is involved in the follow-up process and the process that leads to expulsion. The board of education cannot, on its own initiative, decide to suspend or expel a student.

Within these sections of The Education Act, there is a balance between individual rights and the common good. All children are entitled to an education, but when one student's exercise of that right interferes with the right of a whole class or school of students, the individual student's right may be taken away.

It can be argued that violent behaviour by one student (or a small group of students) violates all students' rights to an education and thus is grounds for suspension or expulsion.

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code

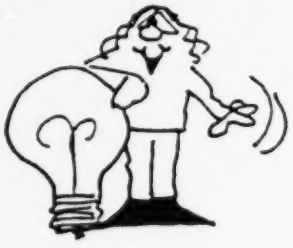
Sexual harassment is considered to be a violent behaviour because it humiliates, intimidates and creates a poisoned environment. It makes schooling uncomfortable and unpleasant for its victims and may interfere with their ability to get maximum benefit from their schooling.

Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination and is against the law in Saskatchewan. Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual conduct that comes within any of the areas protected by The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, such as employment, education, housing and the provision of public services (Doing What's Right, 1990).

Suspension

Suspension requires special discussion. Typically, a student who is suspended is prohibited from attending a school for a specified number of days. When the student comes back, nothing has changed and the student's abusive behaviour tends to repeat itself. In addition, the student has fallen behind on school work (MacDougall, 1993). For these reasons, some schools have stopped using suspension as a punishment or have initiated alternatives to suspension programs. One school has replaced suspensions with a well-defined list of school rules, a clear procedure for enforcing the rules, and a system of rewards for students who obey the rules (Wager, 1992/1993). Another school has set up an Alternatives to Suspension Program in which students who would otherwise be suspended participate in a program that emphasizes:

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



Do you think that suspension is an appropriate punishment for a student involved in a violent incident? Why or why not?

- welcoming, working with and empowering parents;
- teaching anger management skills to students;
- reviewing course selections and career opportunities with students;
- giving the offending student a choice between suspension and doing some type of volunteer service for the school or the community (cleaning sports or lab equipment, picking up litter on the school yard, etc.); and,

- giving the offending student a choice between suspension and making restitution for any property stolen or destroyed (MacDougall, 1993).

Zero Tolerance

The term "zero tolerance" has a different meaning in Eastern Canada than it does in Saskatchewan.

In Eastern Canada the term usually means that students who engage in violent activity will be expelled and may face legal charges. It means that action is taken upon a student's first offence and that there are no second chances.

With the Eastern Canadian approach to zero tolerance, students who are expelled because of violent behaviour are not offered alternate programming. They simply become their parents' responsibility.

Several boards of education in the East are presently embroiled in lawsuits with parents who argue that expelling a student for violent behaviour interferes with that student's legal right to an education.

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT

What does "zero tolerance" mean to you? Does it mean zero tolerance of violent behaviour but not of the student who commits that violent act, or does it mean expelling a student involved in a single violent incident?

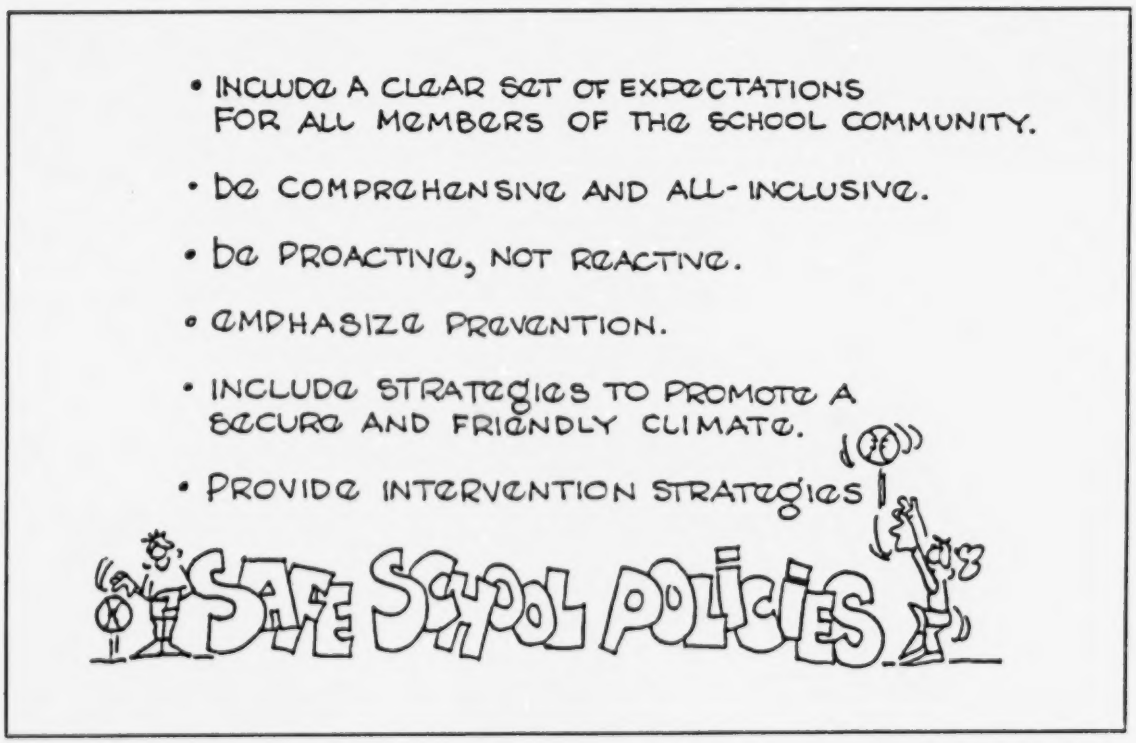
In Saskatchewan, the concept of zero tolerance generally applies to the behaviour, not to the student. Although no violent behaviour is tolerated, the student is not expelled upon a first offence.

Indeed it could be argued that expelling students for a single violent act violates Section 144 of The Education Act. Although the Act does provide for expulsion under some circumstances, its spirit and intent is that the educational system and the community should intervene in the life of a child and try to effect change before expulsion takes place.

Characteristics of an Effective Safe Schools Policy

Effective safe schools policies tend to:

- **include a clear set of expectations for all members of the school community.** The behaviour expected of students, teachers, administrators, other school staff, and visitors to the school is explicitly stated.
- **be comprehensive and all-inclusive.** They address all forms of violent behaviour, not just those that involve extreme physical violence.
- **be proactive, not reactive.** They create expectations for a positive school climate.
- **emphasize prevention.** They encourage prevention through curriculum, programs and practices.
- **include strategies to promote a secure and friendly climate.** These include high visibility of administrators and staff and access to extra-curricular activities for students.
- **provide intervention strategies,** general guidelines for administrators and a range of consequences for infractions (MacDougall, 1993).


• INCLUDE A CLEAR SET OF EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY.
• BE COMPREHENSIVE AND ALL-INCLUSIVE.
• BE PROACTIVE, NOT REACTIVE.
• EMPHASIZE PREVENTION.
• INCLUDE STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE A SECURE AND FRIENDLY CLIMATE.
• PROVIDE INTERVENTION STRATEGIES
SAFE SCHOOL POLICIES

Engaging Stakeholders in Policy Development

Developing a safe schools policy is a process that will probably take several months and will see the involvement of many different groups and individuals.

Teachers and educational administrators who have been involved in safe schools programs and policy development agree that the foundation of an effective policy is community involvement. All stakeholders, including students, parents, educators, police, social service and justice workers, representatives of community organizations and community members, should be involved in the development and implementation of the plan.

Planning is the key to the successful development of a safe schools policy. Approaching the task in a systematic, planned way will help ensure that all stakeholders are fully involved and that the policy truly reflects school and community needs. In most cases, development of safe schools policies (and other types of policies) is led by a small working group made up of one or two central office staff, board members and teachers. In the sections about planning that follow, it is assumed that the policy will be developed in this way. Typical steps in the policy planning process are:

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT

Who are the stakeholder groups in your community that would have an interest in a safe schools policy?

- Identify the need and develop a rationale for the policy.
- Consult with other boards of education that have developed similar policies. Their experiences may be informative.
- Identify stakeholder groups. (Virtually everyone in the community may be a potential stakeholder.)
- Develop strategies for getting input from stakeholder groups. (Several different strategies may be used at several different points in the process.)
- Identify strategies to keep the board informed of progress.
- Begin development of the policy, getting input from stakeholder groups.

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT

If you were designing a plan for development of a safe schools policy, how would you get input from the various stakeholder groups? Remember, it may be appropriate to use a variety of strategies and to return to the same groups more than once.

- Prepare second and third drafts of the policy, getting input from stakeholder groups.
- Periodically review the process used to develop the policy and get public input. Revise if necessary.
- Finalize the policy.
- Use the policy as a springboard for ongoing discussions about the characteristics of safe schools and violence prevention.

Involving the Community

Ideas for making the policy a focus for ongoing interaction with the community include:

Before policy development begins:

- Explain the reasons for a safe schools policy. In some cases, it may be a response to violent incidents. Most often, however, safe schools policies are developed because boards of education want to provide the best possible learning environment for all students and to educate students about the harmful effects of violence.
- Explain to students, teachers and community members that such a policy will contribute to the quality of education.
- Provide examples of the types of incidents towards which the policy is directed.

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT

During development of a safe schools policy, what is the role of the board of education? How would you keep the board of education informed of feedback received from community groups?

- Listen carefully to any concerns expressed by community members about violent incidents in the school or the community.

- Explain the process that will be used to develop the policy.

During policy development:

- Involve students, teachers, board members and community members in writing, reviewing and revising drafts of the policy.

- Use the development process as a springboard for educational activities (lessons, workshops, seminars) about violence, particularly about the less obvious types of violence such as sexual harassment, verbal abuse and bullying.

- Provide information to the public about the need for such a policy and about the way that the policy will benefit school and community.

After the policy has been completed:

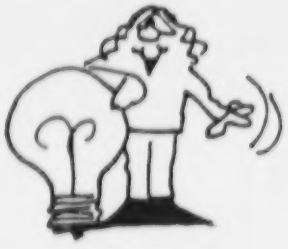
- Use the policy as a foundation for ongoing public education about all forms of violence.

- Continue dialogue with the community about the need for such a policy.

- Emphasize to the community that responsibility for prevention of violent incidents and appropriate handling of those that do occur rests with everyone.

- Create structures so that people with interest and concerns in this area can learn from each other. This may include making the policy the focus of inservice seminars, staff meetings or administrators' conferences.

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT

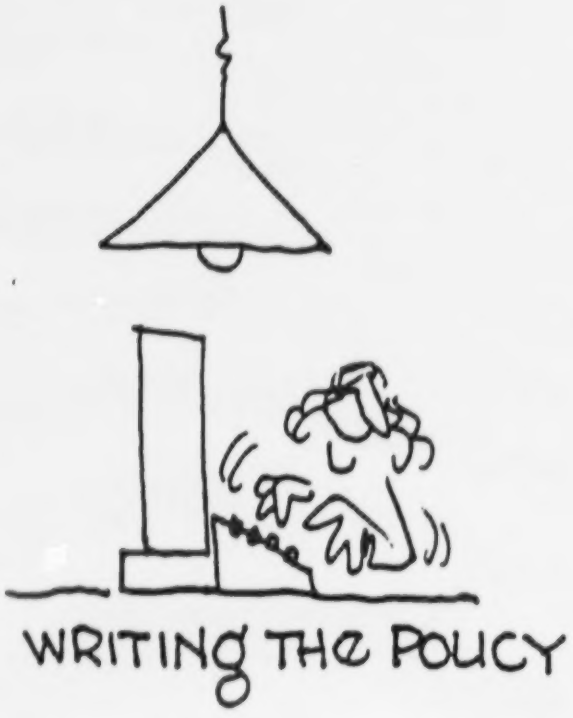


What is the first thing you would do after the safe schools policy is officially adopted by the board?

Writing the Policy

The components that typically appear in a safe schools policy are described below. They include:

- a statement of philosophy;
- a policy statement;
- definition of terms;
- references to the legislation;
- guidelines for prevention activities;
- guidelines for intervention strategies;
- identification of options;
- guidelines for supporting victims; and
- other guidelines.



When you are writing your policy you may wish to include some or all of these components.

Statement of Philosophy

A statement of philosophy tells staff, students and the public the reason for the policy. The statement of philosophy might say that all individuals have a right to personal safety and security and to live without fear. It might also say that schools have an obligation to create environments that are conducive to learning. Thus, violent or aggressive behaviour cannot be tolerated because it is morally wrong and it interferes with learning.

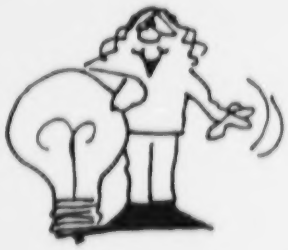
Policy Statement

The policy should clearly state that the board of education is committed to maintaining a safe school environment and that opposes/rejects/condemns any violent acts by its students, staff and trustees. This part of the policy may also state:

- that the board is committed to both prevention and intervention strategies;

- that the board will take disciplinary action in accordance with The Education Act, and board policy when needed;
- that the board will call the police when an action that is against the law takes place; and,
- that the board has a responsibility to educate the community about the safe schools policy and the reasons for its development.

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



How would you use the process of developing a safe schools policy to educate students, teachers, parents and community members as well as to get input concerning the policy?

Below is a sample policy statement.

Policy

It is the policy of The Wellington County Board of Education to foster and maintain a safe environment for its students, staff and community through the implementation of effective measures to deal with violence in schools. These measures include the establishment of preventive procedures, the provision of appropriate early intervention procedures, and the administration of disciplinary action in accordance with The Education Act, Board Policy, and other appropriate legislation (Wellington County Board of Education, 1991).

Definition of Terms

The types of incidents that make students and teachers feel unsafe at school include racial intimidation, vandalism, victimization, persecution, telephone harassment, verbal abuse, bullying, swarming, sexual harassment, pushing and shoving, as well as physical attacks. The definition used in the policy should be broad enough to include all of these types of incidents. It may be appropriate to emphasize that some of these types of activity do not cause physical harm, but all are violent because they are intended to humiliate and intimidate and they create a poisoned school atmosphere that reduces the potential for learning. If examples of violent activity are needed include them in an appendix rather than in the policy itself.

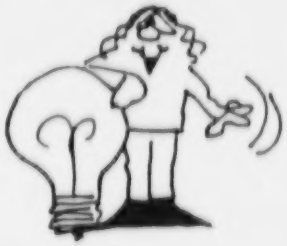
References to the Legislation

Many safe schools policies contain references to the appropriate sections of The Education Act and The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code. These pieces of legislation were discussed in detail earlier in this document.

Guidelines for Prevention Activities

Prevention is an extremely important part of a safe schools policy and/or program. The objective should be to create a school environment that is free of violent incidents, not just to handle such incidents when they occur. The policy should state this objective clearly. The policy might also outline general prevention activities. Be careful to make this listing general in nature. Otherwise, it will soon become outdated. Some general prevention activities that you might want to list include:

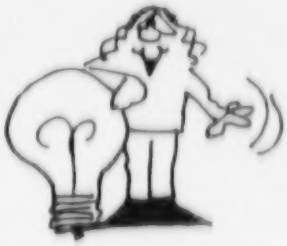
TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



In any safe school program, what percentage of time and energy should be devoted to prevention, what percentage to intervention?

- educating the students, staff, trustees and the community-at-large about what constitutes a violent incident, why such incidents are wrong and how they interfere with learning;
- programs that involve members of the community (parents, business people, Elders, police officers, clergy) in school activities that are intended to promote a safe, positive environment;
- high visibility of administrative, teaching and support staff;
- violence prevention curricula for students; and,
- training for students and teachers about appropriate ways of responding to violent incidents. (Many incidents of bullying, sexual harassment and verbal abuse never come to the attention of school administrators; students and teachers require some training on how to deal with these incidents when they occur.)

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



What options does a teacher have for responding to a habitually aggressive student?

Guidelines for Intervention Strategies

Many safe school policies and student discipline codes contain long lists of consequences for perpetrators and descriptions of the type of consequence that will be applied to each type of offence.

Some safe school policies and student discipline codes also define due process for students. They outline the procedures for both formal and informal hearings depending on the nature of the offence.

Your policy should tell everyone what they are expected to do if a violent incident occurs. Duties of teachers, administrators and other school staff should be clearly spelled out. Consequences should also be spelled out. Students should know what consequences they can expect if they instigate a violent incident. You may wish to identify the different types of violent incidents and list potential consequences of each. For some offences, there may be a range of consequences. For example, if bullying involves teasing and name-calling only, it would be dealt with at school level. However, if bullying involves theft, destruction of property or beatings, the police would probably be called.

In other cases the consequences would be much more clear-cut. In cases of assault with a weapon such as a knife, rock, stick or gun, the police would always be called.

Some possible responses to violent incidents include:

- consulting with the offending student's parents;
- reprimanding the offending student, publicly or privately;
- using the incident as the basis for an informal discussion with students or a formal lesson on appropriate behaviour;
- withdrawing some of the offending student's privileges;
- requiring that the student make restitution;
- requiring that the student participate in a counselling program;
- requiring that the student do school or community service work;
- calling the police;
- suspending the student for a period of time;
- expelling the student; and/or,
- initiating an alternative learning placement for the student.

Many safe schools policies emphasize the consequences of negative behaviour much more than the rewards for or consequences of good behaviour. This approach may be questionable as most effective behaviour management programs must deal with pairs of behaviours. You must strengthen the behaviour you want while systematically weakening the problem behaviours that you do not want (Jones, 1988). Policies that focus primarily on negative behaviours and punishments do not offer students rewards for other behaviour. They tell students what not to do rather than telling them what to do.

Identification of Options

The Education Act requires boards of education to provide all children with an education. However, the Act doesn't specify the exact manner of delivery. Therefore, boards of education have a number of options when dealing with violent and aggressive students. These options include:

- educating the child within the regular classroom;
- educating the child within the regular classroom with support from a resource teacher, psychologist or in-school tutor;
- educating the child in a special program within the school;
- establishing a special program for troubled youth within the school division and busing the child to the program; and/or,
- purchasing services from another school division so that the child can attend a special program already established in another area.

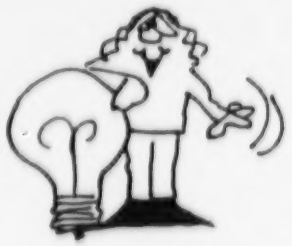
The safe schools policy might outline these various options and specify the circumstances under which each will be used.

Guidelines for Supporting Victims

When a violent incident occurs in a school, there is a tendency to focus on the person who committed the offence. It is equally important to ensure that the victim of the offence receives appropriate support. The safe schools policy should list some of the ways that victims may be supported and make it clear that the board has a commitment to those students and teachers who are victims of violence. Some types of support include:

- counselling by appropriate professionals;

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



What resources (counselling services, justice services, etc.) exist in your community to support victims of violent activities?

- removal of the offender to another location so that the victim is not required to come into contact with the offender;

- involvement of the victim in deciding upon the consequences that are appropriate for the offender; and/or,

- training in assertiveness and/or appropriate ways of avoiding or handling violent incidents.

Other Guidelines

In addition to providing guidelines for prevention and intervention, some boards also include in their policies guidelines for dealing with intruders, and guidelines for dealing with the media and the general public when violent incidents do occur.

Responding to Critical Incidents

Every board of education should have a set of procedures that outlines the steps to be taken when a critical incident occurs. Critical incidents include incidents involving physical violence or the potential for physical violence, the presence of threatening strangers in the school, and student disclosure of physical or sexual abuse. These procedures will ensure that both students and teachers are protected and that all legal requirements are observed. Below is a set of draft guidelines for responding to critical incidents developed by the Regina Public Board of Education. These guidelines were originally developed by the Wellington County Board of Education (Guelph, Ontario) and were modified by the Regina Public Board of Education. They are used with the permission of the Regina Public Board of Education.

A. Prevention

To assist in the prevention of crisis situations, our schools and the Board have developed support programs and services.

These include:

- developing a positive school environment
- implementing classroom curriculum
- responding to tragic events
- building students' self-esteem
- utilizing films, videos, and literature

B. Intervention

- Students should be encouraged to communicate issues or problems that they believe are potentially dangerous.
- Students and school personnel should be aware of all school emergency and response procedures as outlined in manuals, procedures, policies.
- Students and staff share responsibility for the safety and security of the school.

> A simple yet vital action at the prevention and intervention stages is for staff to make their presence known at the first sign of any disturbance, to assess the situation and to seek assistance if necessary.

C. Student Disclosures

School personnel should be aware that Board policy and procedures manuals are available in the schools. These manuals outline intervention measures for dealing with specific situations. Manuals available include:

- Child Abuse
- Child Protection: The School's Role
- Human Rights Equity
- Procedures and Guidelines for a School's Response to a Tragic Event

D. Discipline

The Board has outlined fair and consistent disciplinary action for responding to crisis situations. Procedures for specific disciplinary measures regarding verbal or written threats, racial, physical and/or sexual harassment or abuse, possession of weapons, threats to use weapons, or the use of weapons are included in the Policy or the Procedures Manual or in specific topical handbooks.

E. Reporting Protocol

> In all cases of crisis situations in the school, the Principal/designate will communicate with the students' parent/guardian, unless advised that it is the responsibility of City Police and/or Social Services to notify parents or guardians. The Assistant Superintendent/Superintendent will be notified.

All inquires from visitors or the media regarding crisis situations in the school should be directed to the Principal/designate.

F. Incidents

I. Strangers in the School

Action:

1. Communicate

   - Contact the school office.
   - Identify yourself.
   - State the location of the stranger(s).
   - Describe as many details and characteristics about the individual(s) as possible.

2. If you approach the stranger:

   - Seek assistance first.
   - Consider a safe escape route.
   - Speak in a non-threatening tone.
   - Ask for the person's name and the purpose of the visit.
   - Be directive, e.g., "please report to the office".

II. Students Fighting on School Property

Action:

- Seek help. Contact the school office and other staff first.
- Approach the students and identify yourself.
- Dismiss the audience. If there are spectators, identifying them by name and sending them to specific locations will prevent the possibility of the incident spreading. (This will reduce the chances of those involved playing to the crowd.).
- Defer to rules, not personal authority.
- When attempting to separate the students use specific verbal commands.
- Identify the aggressor.
- Direct the loser to a specific location.
- Obtain students' names and other information.
- Escort those involved to the office.
- Submit a written report to the Assistant Superintendent/Superintendent.

III. Injured Student

a) Minor Injury

Action:

- If you have first aid qualifications and equipment, help the student.
- If you do not, send or take the student to the office.
- If you send the student, notify the office via the intercom.

b) Major Injury

Action:

- Shout for help from other staff or "mature" students.
- Contact the office by intercom or send a messenger. Be sure to state your name, location, and nature of injury.
- If you consider it appropriate, request an ambulance.
- Stay with the injured person until assistance arrives.

IV. Staff Threatened

a) Aggressor is Rational

Action:

- Maintain your rationality.
- Speak in a moderate, calm tone.
- Determine the source of the anger.
- If it is you, diffuse the situation by clarifying your intentions or apologizing for your actions.
- Verbally calm them down.
- Give them a way out and the chance to "save face".
- Make a verbal and written report to the Principal/Vice-Principal.

b) Aggressor is Out of Control

Action:

- Protect yourself and your students, move out of range.
- Continue to talk in a rational, non-threatening tone.
- Seek help. Contact the office and other staff for assistance.
- Attempt physical restraint only to protect your own safety and the safety of students.
- Make a verbal and written report to the Principal/Vice-Principal.
- Make a verbal and written report to the Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent.

V. Person with a Weapon

Action:

1. First staff member on the scene should:

   - Contact the office and inform the Principal or Vice-Principal regarding details of the person(s) involved and weapon(s).
   - Do not approach anyone who is carrying a weapon. Assume that the weapon will be used.
   - Secure all students. Move students out of hallways and from nearby washrooms into secure rooms. Lock all doors, (including washrooms).
   - If an area cannot be secured, then have those students move, giving specific instructions about the location to which the students should move.
   - Listen for further instruction over the intercom.
   - Staff is NOT to use the intercom during this time (except to report location of the person with the weapon).
   - Do NOT activate the fire alarm.

2. Office Staff:

   - Ensure that the Principal or Vice-Principal is notified.
   - Contact police via 911.
   - Have all students leave hallways and move into secure rooms.
   - Lock all doors.
   - Lock the office to allow for uninterrupted communication with staff.
   - Ensure that the intercom is clear for emergency use.

3. Principals and Vice-Principals:

   Action:

   - Ensure that police are notified (911).
   - Instruct all staff and students to move to secure rooms and lock their doors.
   - Designate a person to remain at the intercom as communicator.
   - If an area cannot be secured, then have those students move.
   - Contact the Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent.
   - Do NOT activate the fire alarm.

The school's procedures for handling crisis incidents are to be reviewed annually by staff and students.

From the Symposium

Issue #2: Who should get information about young offenders and high-risk youth? For what purpose?

The second issue discussed at the Safe Schools Symposium comes out of the confidentiality requirements of the Young Offenders Act.

The Young Offenders Act (YOA) is a federal act that applies to young people 12 through 17 years of age. It deals with charges under federal laws such as the Criminal Code and the Narcotics Control Act. It does not apply to provincial laws such as traffic laws.

First-time offenders, who have committed minor offences (and admit to the offence), may not have to go to court. The Crown Prosecutor may refer the youth to the Alternative Measures Program. This is a voluntary program. Youth are free to choose whether to take part in the program and may request, at any time, to have the case dealt with by Youth Court.

> *The Alternative Measures Program provides an opportunity for the youth and the victim of the offence to meet and try to reach a settlement which each believes is fair. An agreement might involve the youth working for the victim or the community, paying the victim for the damage caused, attending counselling, or any other activity acceptable to both. The victim is encouraged to take part in the Alternative Measures process but participation by the victim is voluntary. If the victim chooses not to take part, someone may be appointed to act for the victim.*
>
> *When the youth successfully completes what was agreed to, all those involved with the case will be notified. If the youth was charged, the charge is dismissed and the youth is cleared of any further responsibility for the offence. If the youth does not abide by the terms of the agreement, the Crown Prosecutor will be notified and will decide whether the case should be referred to Youth Court (Alternative Measures Program, n.d.).*

Young people charged with serious offences and those who are repeat minor offenders usually appear in court.

Sentences given by the courts to young people found guilty of an offence (or who plead guilty) under the YOA are called dispositions. Possible dispositions include:

- an absolute discharge – although the young person is found guilty he or she is released without having any penalty imposed.
- fines – a fine of up to $1,000 can be imposed.

- compensation – the offender pays money to the victim. The money is meant to make up for property damage, loss of income or personal injury.

- restitution – the offender pays for, replaces or returns stolen or damaged property.

- personal service – the offender does work or other service that benefits the victim.

- community service – a maximum of 240 hours of community service work can be ordered per year. This work might include working at a community centre, helping to clean up a park or any similar jobs that benefit the community.

- medical or psychological treatment

- probation for two years or less. Probation means that the young offender is released but must meet certain conditions such as observing a curfew, avoiding certain places, and people and reporting regularly to a social worker.

- open custody – the young offender is placed in a facility such as a group home where there are no bars on the windows or locks on the doors. Youth in open custody often go to local schools.

- secure custody – the young offender is placed in a facility where freedom is restricted. Most secure custody facilities have their own educational program, but sometimes students go to local schools when they are working their way back into the community.

The list of dispositions (sentences) that may be given to young offenders by the Court only tells part of the story. Dispositions can include a whole range of additional requirements including intensive supervision and treatment. For example, the Paul Dojack Centre has a treatment

IN SASKATCHEWAN

Most people are aware that various youth centres operate around the province, but aren't sure what the purpose of each centre is. Some of the better-known centres are described below.

Secure Custody Centres

- *Paul Dojack Youth Centre – Regina*
- *North Battleford Youth Centre – North Battleford*
- *Kilburn Hall – Saskatoon*

Open Custody Centres

In addition to the centres listed below, many private individuals have been contracted by Saskatchewan Social Services as Community Home Operators. These Community Homes provide open custody and are located all across the province.

- *Yarrow Youth Farm – Saskatoon*
- *Battleford Youth Cottage – North Battleford*
- *Creighton Community Youth Residence – Creighton*
- *Kenosee Youth Camp – Carlyle*
- *Prince Albert Youth Residence – Prince Albert*
- *House of Concord (Salvation Army) – Regina*

Family Services/Open Custody Centres

These centres provide open custody for young people. They also serve children aged approximately 12-15 years who are in need of protection as specified in The Child and Family Services Act. Children in this category are experiencing various types of difficulties in life, are wards of the government or have been apprehended (removed from an unsafe home environment).

- *Dales House – Regina*
- *Oskietawan Group Home – Sandy Bay*
- *Alex Bishop Group Home – Green Lake*

In addition to all the centres listed above, several other types of youth centres exist in Saskatchewan. These include Ranch Ehrlo – a private residential treatment centre – adolescent group homes, adolescent treatment group homes and therapeutic foster homes. All of these centres serve youth who are experiencing difficulties in their lives and who may or may not have been involved with the law.

program for sexual offenders. A young person who is given a secure custody disposition might be required to attend this program.

Sometimes a judge asks for a pre-disposition report (PDR) before sentencing a youth. This report is prepared by a social worker and gives the judge more information about the youth and her or his life. The social worker will talk to the youth, his or her parents and school, and to other people when preparing this report (The Young Offenders Act, 1992; Youth and the Law: Criminal Justice, 1993).

Two aspects of the Young Offenders Act and its application are problematic for schools. The first is the issue of confidentiality of information. The Act severely limits the individuals and agencies that may have access to information about young offenders.

Saskatchewan Social Services (1994) describes situations in which information might be shared as follows:

- Section 44.1 YOA describes situations in which information might be shared. Release of information is permitted to those who are involved in the supervision and care of the young person.

    - The emphasis is on the offender (information is shared to assist in work with the offender) and the release of information is permitted for purposes which assist the offender to successfully complete his disposition and to deal with his or her issues which have lead to current and future offending behaviour.

    - Supervision in the legislation is tied to supervision of the court order and all those involved in case planning and case management. These activities often do involve schools where schools are part of a plan to help improve academic performance and develop social skills.

    - The need for the school to be involved in supervision is clear with certain offenders. For example, should a youth be convicted of a sexual offence and be assessed as being able to be supervised and treated in the community, community safety and successful treatment requires minimization of opportunity. One of the ways that this might be done is through knowledge of potential behaviour and supervision of activities.

However, the legislation does not mention educators as being among those entitled to access the records of young offenders. An Order in Council issued by Saskatchewan's Lieutenant Governor in Council on September 9, 1992 amended the Young Offenders Act by designating a long list of classes of people who are entitled, under certain circumstances, to access certain records relating to young offenders. The list includes the Ombudsman, personnel of Saskatchewan Government Insurance and various justice and social service workers. It does not include directors of education, principals, teachers or other educational personnel. This lack of information creates many problems for schools.

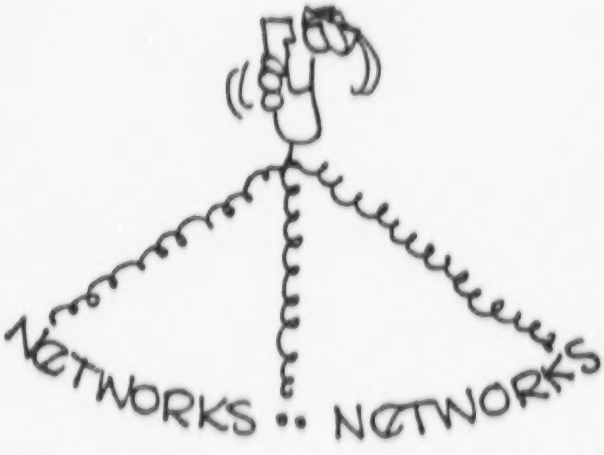
Sometimes Social Services will place troubled youth in a school and, because of the confidentiality requirements of the Young Offenders Act, not tell the school about the student's legal history. Sometimes schools may not even be aware that a student is serving a sentence in a closed custody facility for a serious offence.

When information about young people's involvement with the law is made available to the schools, it is usually only about individuals who are convicted. Information about young people who are charged with an offence is rarely available to schools.

This may create a danger for everyone in the school and may also make it difficult for the school to design an appropriate program for the student. One of the basic principles of effective education is that you must know each individual child in order to design a program for that child and to respond to the child's academic, social and personal needs.

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT

What information should a director of education, principal or teacher be entitled to receive about a student who has been charged and/or convicted under the Young Offenders Act? Should educators be allowed to share this information with others? If so, with whom, under what circumstances?



In some communities, the school principal and other educators have established networks with police and social workers, so that they can get information through informal means.

A second aspect of the Young Offenders Act that is problematic for schools is the conditions that may be attached to a young offender's disposition (sentence). A common condition is that the young person attend school. Another common condition is a non-association order. The offender may be ordered to avoid associating with his or her victim, with children under a certain age, or with other youth who have been convicted along with the offender.

Such conditions attached to a young offender's disposition often cause great concern for school staff. The staff wonders whether they are responsible for enforcing the conditions while the youth is at school. It is important to note that these conditions apply to the young offender. The offender, not the school staff, is responsible for complying with them.

Often, before a school placement is determined for a young offender, the youth's social worker will do joint planning with the school principal and other relevant people to determine whether staff are available to supervise the youth. Supervision might be provided by school staff, Social Services staff or staff from some other agency. In some cases, options such as home schooling, or distance education, will be considered when determining the educational placement that is best for a particular young offender.

When joint planning for a youth's educational placement is necessary, a certain amount of information about the youth is, through necessity, shared by social workers with school administrators and other school staff. The information shared, most often, relates specifically to conditions attached to the youth's disposition (sentence), not to all aspects of the youth's behaviour.

The Young Offenders Act applies only to young people aged 12 to 17. Children under the age of 12 who participate in violent or destructive activities are dealt with through Saskatchewan Social Services', Family Services Program. Services available through this program include parent aide, parent education and life skills training, assessment, counselling and therapy (Family Services, n.d.).

Participants in the Safe Schools Symposium focussed on the question, "Who should get information about young offenders and for what purpose?"

Virtually all participants agreed that the present system isn't working very well. It isn't always possible for educators to get information informally from police officers and social workers. Sometimes, schools simply don't know about a student's involvement with the law. Other times, schools get information through a combination of community gossip; disclosure by parents, the young offender or the victim; or through self-aggrandizing boasting by the young offender. In this situation, it becomes very difficult to distinguish between fact and rumour.

Some Symposium participants said that schools should get information about all young people charged or convicted of any offences. Others said that the focus should be on those charged or convicted of serious offences, but then talked about the difficulty of determining which offences are serious and which are not.

All participants agreed that schools need information about:

- a violent student's potential to re-offend;

- a student's potential threat to the safety of others; and,

- the risk that a student presents to the safety of the school environment.

Participants' concerns went beyond these safety issues, however. They emphasized that the classroom teacher often has more contact time with a child than that child's parent and certainly more time with the child than a social or youth worker. Full knowledge about the child's history will allow the teacher to plan an appropriate educational program for the child, to help the child find constructive outlets for his or her energy, and provide positive reinforcement for appropriate behaviour.

School administrators need information about young offenders so that they can support the efforts of the classroom teacher and steer the youth toward supports such as mentorship programs, and guidance and counselling services.

One group emphasized that while confidentiality serves a purpose, it should not be maintained if it means jeopardizing the safety of other students in the school or denying possible help to the young offender.

The majority of participants felt that disclosure of information should be on a "need to know" basis. It doesn't have to be a case of either "nobody knows" or "everybody knows".

There was strong agreement that some type of provincial policy or protocol is needed concerning sharing of information and that schools should be involved in the development of such a policy.

Some (but not all) of the participants mentioned the possibility of a registry of young offenders and suggested that such a registry would make it easier for schools to get the information they need.

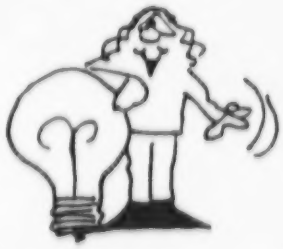
Symposium participants also discussed the Young Offenders Act more generally. There was considerable concern that while the Act doesn't apply to children under 12, some children below this age are involved in violent and illegal behaviour. Many participants felt that there should be a better process to deal with offenders under the age of 12.

Part III: What Can I Do?

Introduction

Establishing safe schools is both a long- and short-term issue. In the long term, the ideal is to create a climate where violence does not occur. In the short term, it is necessary to handle or defuse violent or potentially violent incidents. The sections that follow discuss long- and short-term solutions, special measures that are needed when dealing with high risk youth, concerns associated with high risk youth, and concerns associated with confidentiality.

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



In a safe schools program, what percentage of time and energy should be devoted to prevention? What percentage to intervention?

IN SASKATCHEWAN

Late in 1993, Regina's Public and Catholic Boards of Education decided to take action to ensure that their traditions and reputations as providers of safe and caring environments for children are maintained. Although no more violence has been reported in these two school systems than in others in Saskatchewan, they recognized that prevention is better than intervention.

These two boards of education established the 20-person Committee for Safe Schools. The Committee was truly a partnership of all those who share in the concern for safe and positive school environments.

It was jointly chaired by Jane Newton of Regina Public Schools and Dan Kral of Regina Catholic Schools. School system representatives included trustees, administrative staff, teachers and support staff. Community representatives came from the Circle Project, Regina City Police, the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association and several provincial government agencies. The Committee also included parent representatives.

Two beliefs provided a foundation for all of the Committee's work. These beliefs were:

- *Regina Schools are dedicated to maintaining safe learning environments.*
- *Parents and the community-at-large expect schools to be safe.*

The Committee's activities included conducting a survey, hearing presentations from experts, commissioning a series of research papers, sending representatives to conferences, and reviewing policies and handbooks from other boards of education.

The Committee prepared an interim report in June 1994. Its future plans include further presentations and research, developing a brochure on safe schools and preparing a final report before December 1994. It is anticipated that the final report will include recommendations about policies and procedures; the development of a safe schools handbook; and parent, school and community involvement.

Safe Schools: Long-Term Solutions

Building a Positive School Culture

When a violent incident occurs, intervention is usually necessary to cut the incident short and to reduce the possibility of physical or psychological harm to participants and bystanders. The ultimate objective, however, is to create a school environment that is violence free – one in which intervention is not necessary.

> *The entire school community needs to change from a bureaucracy which responds to individual trouble-makers to a new community where violence is unlikely to occur* (British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 1993).

For many boards of education, the first step in creating a violence-free environment is making a commitment in policy and in action that their schools will be safe for anyone with legitimate business on school grounds (Friedlander, 1993).

A safe schools policy provides a philosophical foundation for the implementation of measures necessary to create a violence-free school environment. It can also provide specific guidelines for handling violent incidents.

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT

Identify some ways that the environment in your school might be changed so that it promotes the personal safety of staff and students.

Inservice for staff in order to raise their awareness and inform them about safe schools issues is as important as developing a policy. School staff need to know that all violence isn't physical. Intimidation, bullying and harassment are also forms of violence. Staff need to learn to recognize violent incidents and to handle those incidents in an appropriate manner when they occur.

The climate that educators create in the school is central to creating a safe school. A climate that emphasizes discipline, high expectations, stability and love promotes a safe school.

All children, but particularly those exposed to violence, need clear rules and stable routines. Discipline should be perceived as upholding expectations for a code of decent conduct rather than a list of punishments.

In return for complying with the rules of good behaviour, students need to receive assurance of their personal safety. They must never feel that they have to rely on themselves and their gangs for safety. Students will feel more secure when they see a highly visible presence by school staff, incidents that do occur being dealt with consistently, and emergency procedures that are publicized and practiced (Friedlander, 1993). Other important factors in creating a safe school are listed below.

- **Treat individual students with respect, courtesy and friendliness.** Teachers can show friendliness to students in small ways such as standing by the door as students enter the classroom (Williams, 1993). No matter what happens, school staff should never use sarcasm, ridicule, name-calling or physical punishment in order to maintain control.

- **Ensure that all students experience academic success.** Students who aren't doing well in school usually feel frustrated, angry or hopeless – feelings that can be expressed through aggressive or violent behaviour. Ensuring that all students experience success may mean changing teaching styles – using group work and hands-on activities as well as lectures, for example. It might mean breaking a task down into small steps, so that students can master each step (Williams, 1993).

- **Ensure that lessons are relevant and meaningful.** Subject matter should be relevant to students. When the school has a large percentage of minority students, the typical Eurocentric curriculum may have little relevance (Auger, 1993; Walcott & Dei, 1993) Regardless of students' background, a lesson that is well planned and well organized will hold their attention better than a lesson that wanders (Williams, 1993).

- **Model appropriate behaviour.** Children learn through example as well as through direct instruction. Most prevention programs target school staff, first. This enables staff to "model" the communication skills and good relations strategies they teach their students (MacDougall, 1993). If schools expect students to be in class on time, complete assigned work on the date due, and listen when another person is talking, staff members must demonstrate the same behaviour (Williams, 1993).

The physical environment of a school can be designed so that it promotes school safety. Suggestions for the physical environment include:

- **Create "people spaces"** that create a friendly environment. A few well-placed plants and a casual area within a classroom can do wonders (Thornburg, 1992).

- **Provide adequate supervision.** Ensure that teachers and administrative staff have a high profile during recess and noon hour, make sure that hidden areas in the schoolyard are well supervised, leave classroom doors open so that teachers are aware of activities in the hallways (Morgan & Palermo, 1992; Thorburn, 1993).

Most Canadian schools and boards of education view the creation of a violence-free school as a responsibility of both the school and the community. For that reason, they usually regard violence prevention programs as partnerships and involve community groups, parent groups, police and government agencies in addition to the board and school staff. Pooling experience, skills and expertise better utilizes resources and contributes to a sense of shared ownership and shared responsibility.

Sexual Assault/Harassment

Sexual assault and sexual harassment differ from other types of violence in that the overwhelming majority of victims of these incidents are female. It has often been noted that society encourages men and boys to be strong, aggressive and powerful. Males who sexually assault or harass females are simply exhibiting socially approved behaviour in an extreme form (MacDougall, 1993).

At the school level, sexual assault and harassment involves creation of a gender-equitable school environment. Suggestions for making the school environment more gender equitable follow.

- Ensure that females' as well as males' experience and contributions to society are recognized in curricula.

- Eliminate harmful gender bias in resource materials and assessment practices.

The Board of Education of Moose Jaw School Division No. 1 was one of the first boards of education in Saskatchewan to develop and implement policy guidelines relating to sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment perpetuated by an employee is addressed through a sexual harassment policy. This policy begins with the statement:

> *"The Moose Jaw Board of Education believes that students and employees are entitled to expect an environment free from sexual harassment."*

It then defines sexual harassment and describes the procedure that is to be followed in the event of a complaint about sexual harassment by an employee.

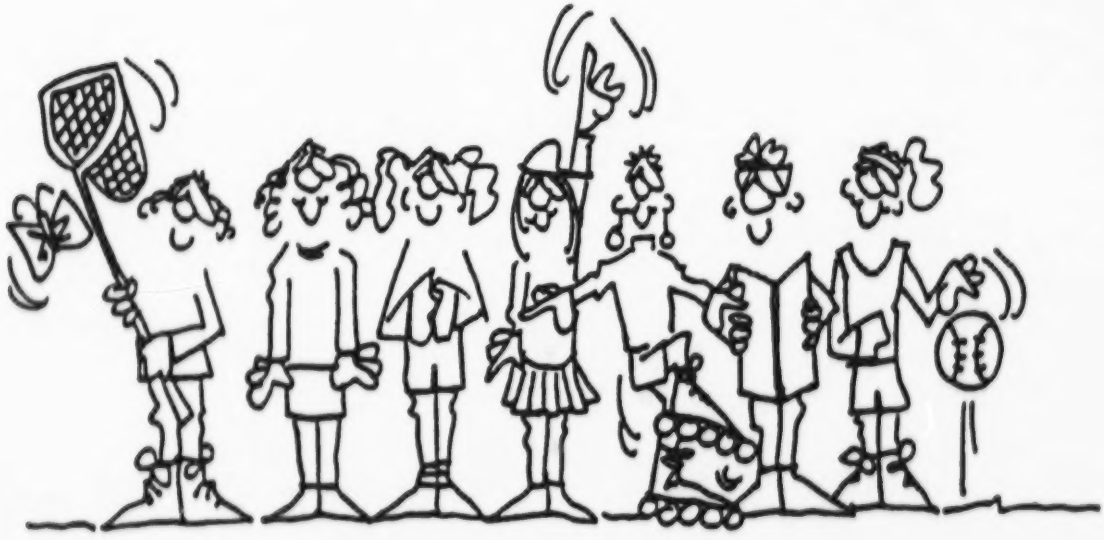
Sexual harassment perpetuated by a student is addressed through the student discipline policy. This policy specifies parent involvement as a minimum penalty and suspension as a maximum penalty for a first offence. It specifies parent involvement as the minimum penalty and expulsion as the maximum penalty for a repeat offence.

- Give students of both genders equal attention and encouragement and ensure that both genders participate equally in activities in the various subject areas and co-curricular programs.

- Integrate attention to the affective domain into all areas of study, and promote respect for the emotional and personal as a legitimate field of study.

- Engage male and female students to look critically at gender roles in both personal and academic terms.

- Shape the school environment to increase respect for women, to encourage women to take leadership roles, and to support young men in assuming nurturing roles.



- Work for gender parity in administrative roles and in curriculum areas.

- Provide teachers with information and resources about fostering gender equity. (High School Review, 1994)

Violence Awareness/Reduction Curricula

Some schools and school boards are attempting to prevent violence by addressing this issue in the formal school program. In a few cases, there is a formal separate unit of study on violence and abuse-related topics. More often, units on family violence prevention, self-esteem, communication skills, anger management and conflict resolution are woven into courses such as English, drama, health and guidance. Generally, the goal of violence prevention programs is to raise student and staff awareness of:

- *the various forms of violence that exist in society and hence in schools;*

- *an alternative reality in which violence is not a natural part of life, relationships or problem solving; and*

- *the many skills and strategies that promote non-violent conflict resolution and healthy relations, and how to use them* (MacDougall, 1993).

Most violence prevention programs target teachers and other staff first and try to raise their awareness. This enables staff to model the communication skills and interpersonal skills they teach to their students. Most of the well established violence prevention programs also include parents in the process. Including parents gives students a stronger message about the importance of non-violent behaviour than if the program were limited only to the school (MacDougall, 1993).

Typically, violence prevention programs include both academic examination of issues and role playing. For example, in a drama class, students might research the behaviour of gangs and then do a series of role plays in which they try to persuade each other to participate/not participate in gang activity, describe what it feels like to be part of a gang and describe how it feels when they are not part of a group (Sadowski, 1992).

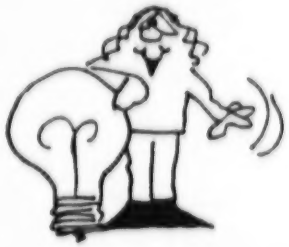
In a contemporary studies class, students might identify the norms they are expected to follow in school and discuss alternate ways of handling problematic situations such as a fellow student's verbal assault on a teacher and an incident of vandalism (Pickering, 1992).

Safe Schools: Short-Term Solutions

Teacher Management of Tense Situations

Disputes, arguments and loud student outbursts can be settled in ways that reduce tension and reduce the potential for present and future physical violence. Below are some suggestions for ways that teachers can de-escalate tense situations.

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



If you were faced with a violent incident – a student screaming swear words at you, two extremely angry teenagers fighting with each other, a swarming incident – how would you handle it?

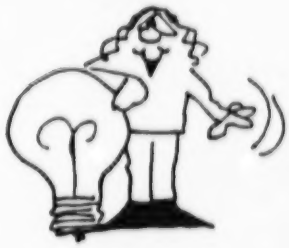
- **Never take it personally.** When a student verbally abuses a teacher, the remarks are often not directed at the teacher. The teacher just happens to be a handy target or a symbol of authority. In this situation, responding to a student with an angry lecture or sarcasm usually only escalates the problem. Sometimes a direct order such as "Go to your classroom now" will work, but a more effective approach is detach yourself emotionally and use a peacemaking approach such as:
  - silence. Some disruptive students will retreat in the face of silence.
  - ignoring the attack and responding with a neutral remark such as "What's up?" This allows the student to provide information about what's really bothering him or her.
  - a non sequitur or nonsense comment that has nothing to do with the situation. This distracts the student and also allows him or her to provide information about the real problem.
- **Ask open-ended questions** that will allow the student to talk about the real problem. Often when a student explodes at a teacher, the real issue is something else entirely. Open-ended, non-authoritarian comments will help the student talk about what is really on his or her mind.
- **Allow everyone to save face.** Students sometimes provoke a public confrontation because they feel that verbally abusing a teacher will give them status with onlookers. In this type of situation it is important that the teacher save face. Try to meet privately with the student, or respond with silence or a neutral remark so that the student doesn't get the attention s/he craves. Some strategies for allowing students to save face include:
  - using a distracter such as whispering, "Your fly is open";
  - creating a diversion such as a loud noise, or flicking the lights; and,

- using nonverbal language such as hand signals to move students out of the area.

- **Ignore some comments.** Not everything a student says requires a response. Responding to every statement will sometimes only escalate a situation.

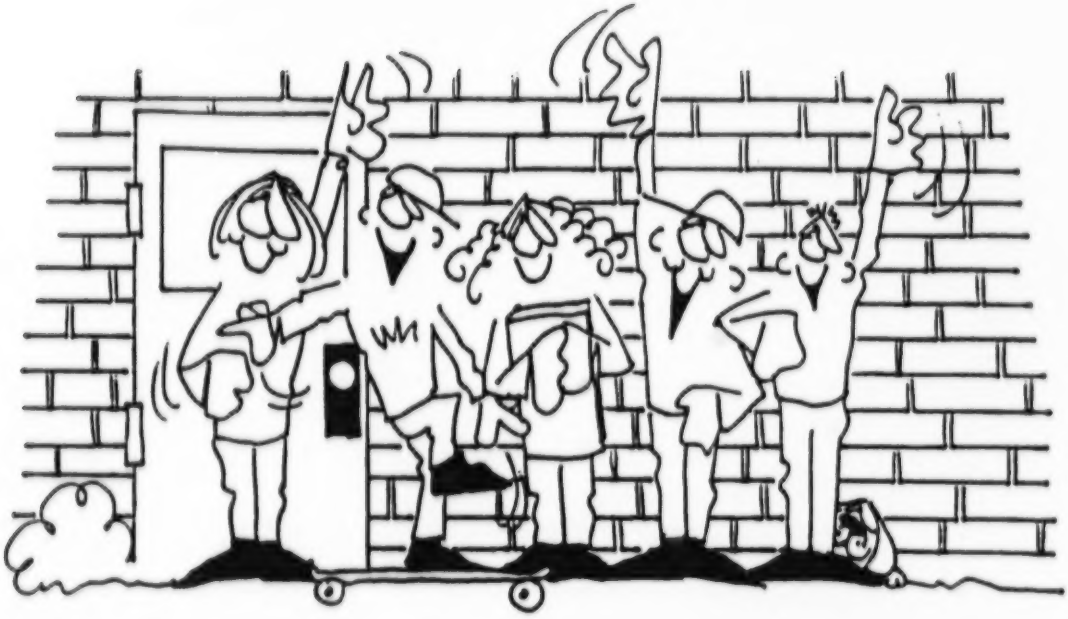
- **Repeat a student's statements.** Repeating a student's verbally aggressive comments slowly allows the student to really hear what s/he has said (MacDougall, 1993; The Trouble with Trouble, 1992).

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



How could teacher preservice and inservice programs better equip teachers to handle violent incidents? Should this be included in teachers' formal training or is it something that teachers should learn on the job?

What resources exist in your community to provide teachers with guidance on handling violent incidents? Some possible resources include police, Social Services staff, counsellors, clergy, Elders, women's shelter staff.



Peer Mediation Programs

Discipline procedures can be classified on a continuum. At one end of the continuum the focus is on teachers managing and controlling student behaviour. On the other end, the focus is on students regulating their own and their peers' action. Traditional discipline programs require an adult to monitor student behaviour, determine whether it is acceptable to force students to stop inappropriate actions or mediate student disputes. Such programs cost instructional and administrative time and do not allow students to learn the procedures, skills and attitudes that enable them to solve conflicts constructively (Johnson et al., 1992).

Therefore, some schools are focusing on peer mediation programs that allow students to solve their own problems and regulate their own and their classmates' behaviour. In peer mediation programs, students are trained to act as mediators in their classmates' disputes. Although details vary from one program to another, in most programs the students who volunteer to be mediators receive training that emphasizes staying impartial, rephrasing disputants' words, identifying the real problem, acknowledging feelings and needs, identifying options and alternatives and referring when necessary. The training includes both theory and practice in the form of role playing.

Saskatoon Community Mediation Services, a non-profit organization, has played a major role in introducing peer mediation programs into Saskatchewan schools. A couple of years ago this organization began working with several inner-city schools including Westmount and King George Community Schools in Saskatoon. Initially, all grade six or seven students in these schools were trained in basic mediation skills. Some teachers then asked for Core Volunteer Mediators – students who wanted to continue on and receive additional training. The program has worked well in these two schools, and has generated a lot of interest in other schools. The Saskatoon Separate School Board counsellors received training and are piloting peer mediation programs in that system. The Regina Separate School Board heard about the program and asked for training. So did Wynyard, North Battleford, Shoal Lake, and Esterhazy.

Grade 8 students at Esterhazy High School were introduced to conflict resolution skills in their Social Studies classes last year. Topics studied included understanding conflict, communicating effectively, and using problem solving, negotiation and mediation to resolve conflicts. About 16 hours of class time was spent on the unit. Instruction focused on practising interpersonal skills through cooperative groups, role-playing and problem solving activities. Following the unit of study, peer mediators were selected to receive further training and to be available to mediate conflicts on request. Students who volunteered and were nominated by their peers were selected to be mediators. Referral forms were made available to staff and students so that conflicts could be referred to mediation. A few conflicts were mediated and staff and students were enthusiastic about continuing the program this year.

This year, peer mediators were trained in two after-school workshops: each was three hours long. They will continue to practice their mediation skills at noon hour meetings. Peer mediators who use effective conflict resolution skills formally and informally will be helping to create a safe school environment as well as serving as role models for their classmates. Participants in the program are confident that as staff and students become familiar with the mediation process it will become an integral part of the school culture.

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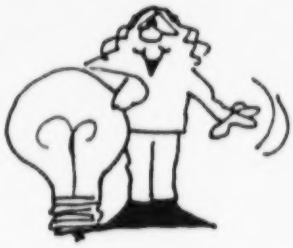
TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



Why are student mediators often as effective as adults at assisting other students to resolve differences?

In some programs, different students are appointed each day as mediators of the day. In other programs, the names of all student mediators are well publicized and the mediators are available when needed. In some programs, mediation happens in a fairly formal way – after the incident at a specific time and place with the disputants seated.

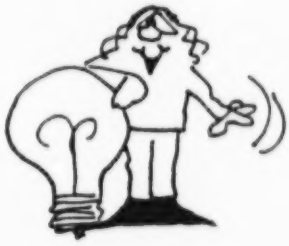
In other cases, it happens informally on the playground right as a dispute is taking place. In some programs, only one mediator is involved in a dispute; in others two mediators are. The primary focus of peer mediation programs is student/student disputes but in some schools peer mediation is also used to resolve disputes between students and teachers. In a student/teacher dispute two mediators, a student and a teacher, are involved. (Ainsworth, 1991; Franklin, 1991; Friedlander, 1993; In Search of Peace, 1993; Johnson et al., 1992; MacDougall, 1973)

Schools that have implemented peer mediation programs report that they work well. One of the benefits of a student-driven mediation process over one directed by an adult, is that it corrects the imbalance of power that can inhibit resolution. Mediation can prevent incidents from escalating. For example, it can prevent a single fight from developing into an endless round of retaliation (Fine et al, 1991/1992; MacDougall, 1993).

The Victims

Most safe schools policies and descriptions of safe schools projects emphasize the offender. There is a great deal of information about why children engage in aggressive acts and about appropriate discipline, counselling and rehabilitation of the offender. There is much less emphasis on the victim, on supports and counselling for the victim and on justice from the victim's point of view. Thus the information that follows about victims is somewhat sparse.

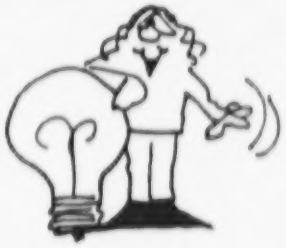
TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



Why do you think most safe schools policies and most descriptions of safe schools programs emphasize the offender(s)?

Who Becomes a Victim?

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



What have you done in your school to teach children how they can avoid becoming victims? What can you do?

There is some evidence that some children are more subject to victimization than others. A recent study (Hit Me Please, 1994) showed that children who are frequently picked on, are those with a generally submissive behavioral style. They rarely lead their peers in any positive fashion and less often initiate conversation or attempt to persuade or dissuade their peers. They behave in this way because they lack common social skills. This same study suggested that victimization is a three-step process that changes the behaviour of both the victim and the aggressor. The steps in this process are:

- The eventual victim submits to persuasion.
- Capitulation reinforces the aggressive behaviour of aggressors, who then increase the severity of coercive acts.
- The victim changes in response to victimization.

IN SASKATCHEWAN

Many researchers have looked at perpetrators of violent incidents – why they behave as they do – what can be done to help them. Brian Noonan of the Saskatoon Catholic Board of Education has taken a different approach. He has focussed on the victim in his research (Noonan, 1993).

Dr. Noonan notes that there are levels of risk for victimization and that these levels correspond to the levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The less risk of victimization, the more possibility that a person will become a fully, self-actualizing human being. Educators need to better understand how different levels of victimization produce fear in students' lives.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	*Levels of Risk*
Self-actualization	*Personal self-determination*
Aesthetic: appreciation for beauty, order	*School success/ Productivity*
Cognitive: seek information and understanding	*Opportunities/ Support*
Self-esteem: respect/ approval from others	*Isolation/ Rejection*
Belongingness: love, affection and acceptance	*Intimidation*
Safety needs: security and psychological safety	*Physical harm*
Physiological needs: food, sleep and water	*Life-endangering*

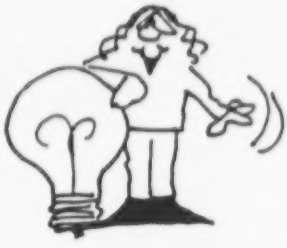
Dr. Noonan believes that a safe, positive school environment for all students is the ultimate goal. But until students are free from fear, schools must take measures to prevent students from being victimized. Indeed, teaching students how to avoid becoming victims is an important step in achieving a violence-free school. Dr. Noonan suggests that all of the following can help achieve that goal.

- *School policies that define violence, state that it won't be tolerated and outline consequences.*

Supporting Victims

Victims of violent incidents often suffer from psychological trauma long after the incident. Feder (1992) describes the feelings and reactions that victims experience, using teachers as an example. However, her description of victim traumatization applies to all victims of violent incidents. Typically, an individual's response to a crisis has three stages. Feelings of shock, disbelief and denial accompany the first stage, which may last only a few moments or may continue for months. During the second stage, victims experience a wide range of emotions which may include anger, fear, confusion, guilt or grief. Anger may be directed at God, human error, the criminal justice system or oneself. Terror and panic attacks may occur.

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



Why do you think that the system often fails to provide victims of violent incidents with the support they need?

IN SASKATCHEWAN

Continued . . .

- *Teacher/student workshops on dealing with fear, avoiding potentially violent situations, behaving assertively.*
- *Peer mediation programs that train students to defuse potentially violent situations.*
- *Adult/community task force because violence is a societal problem not just a school problem.*
- *Safe routes to school because schools have an obligation to ensure that children can go to and from school without fear of violence. A buddy system may be part of this program.*
- *Witness programs because we are all responsible for protecting each other and there must be formal ways of doing this.*
- *Police involvement when necessary.*
- *Curriculum content that focuses on dealing with fear, on not becoming a victim and on non-violent problem-solving.*
- *A school program that is student-centred with a focus on counselling-based approaches to teaching.*

The third stage is the reconstruction of equilibrium which can be a difficult and time-consuming process. Feder (1992) emphasizes that victims often suffer injury not only from the incident, but also from a system that fails to provide sufficient support. Many victims report that rather than receiving help after an incident, they are ostracized, avoided, ignored and sometimes even abused. Guidelines for supporting victims include:

1. **Respond as quickly as possible.** Victims often report delays in getting medical, administrative and security assistance.

2. **Find out what individuals need.** The focus should be on the victim's needs. These will differ from one incident to another depending on the nature of the incident and the personality of the victim. Usually, the victim is in the best position to determine what his/her needs are.

3. **Be available.** Some victims will have a need to talk, others will need reassurance. Still others will just want someone around so that they aren't alone. Injured people should never be left alone.

4. **Be aware of critical periods following the incident.** Critical periods include the immediate aftermath, the initial days after the incident, court appearances, encounters with police and the return to work. Victims may require additional support during these periods (Feder, 1992).

Sexual assault is an offence that requires special sensitivity. The following steps have been suggested as appropriate supports for victims of sexual assault.

- *an official advocate is promptly made available to the victim;*
- *counselling is immediately made available to the victim(s) and their families;*
- *when a student has been charged, alternative arrangements be made for his education, in consultation with the student and his parents;*
- *information needs to be made available to staff, students and parents (if there is a void, someone can fill it with rumours and misinformation);*
- *time and appropriate personnel be provided to students, parents, and staff to assist them in dealing with their reactions to the situation;*
- *teachers and administrators be legally advised on such issues as confidentiality, talking to the defense (e.g., no information, formal or informal, about the victim should be made available to the defense without the written permission of the parents or of the student if s/he is 18), the importance of supporting children who have come forward, and of not publicly siding with the accused; and,*
- *employee and student records of the involved individuals be promptly removed from the school and board offices and placed in safe keeping* (MacDougall, 1993, pp. 59-60).

Dealing with High-Risk Youth

Designing an Appropriate Program

When used in a safe schools context, the term "high-risk youth" refers to youth whose violent or antisocial behaviour at school may endanger their own or others' personal safety, or prevent themselves or other students from learning.

The majority of individuals working with high-risk youth stress that these children's school experience should gradually replace external authoritarian controls with students' own internal controls and that students should be systematically taught the personal, interpersonal, communication and social skills that they need for healthy family and community life (Ewashen et al, 1992; Tierney et al, 1993; Walker, 1993).

A relatively strong consensus is emerging among experts that a successful, comprehensive intervention program for antisocial behaviour should contain the following elements:

- *Schools should take the lead in setting up and coordinating a **home, school, and community agency intervention program.***
- *The school should monitor **student behaviour carefully** so that it can begin the intervention process as soon as a student's antisocial behaviour indicators emerge.*
- *A brief **parent training program** should focus on five basic parenting practices: (a) how to closely monitor a child's whereabouts, activities, and friends; (b) how to participate actively in a child's life; (c) how to use such positive techniques as encouragement, praise, and approval to manage a child's home behaviour; (d) how to ensure that discipline is fair, timely, and appropriate to the offence; and (e) how to use effective conflict-resolution and problem-solving strategies.*
- *The program should **assist parents in setting up reward systems** in the home that provide incentives for the child to achieve academic success and to behave appropriately at school, and it also should help parents to encourage their child to develop a positive attitude toward school.*

- *A tracking-monitoring system for school and home should provide daily, two-way communication about the student's performance at school and parental acknowledgement of that performance.*

- *The school program should teach the personal, academic, and social skills that the at-risk student needs for school success. This instructional program should be accompanied by unobtrusive but sensitive school monitoring systems that measure progress.*

- *The school should establish a program of peer and teacher mentors who take an active interest in the antisocial, at-risk student's school success* (Walker, 1993).

Training Staff to Work with High-Risk Youth

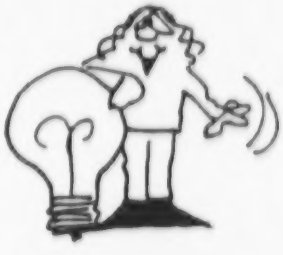
In order to effectively implement a program for high-risk youth, staff need the following seven critical interaction skills.

- **Relationship-building components** – The ability to develop warm, caring relationships with youth – relationships that emphasize a partnership in the youth's treatment, rather than relationships built on power and the exercise of authority.

- **Praise and differential reinforcement** – The ability to recognize appropriate youth behaviours when they occur and to offer immediate verbal reinforcement (praise) of them.

- **Behavioural specificity** – The ability to specifically observe, describe and target behaviours that the youth demonstrates.

TO THINK/TALK ABOUT



How can teachers and other school staff develop skills that will help them deal with high-risk youth? Should they be taught these skills during their preservice education? Should inservice programs be available? Do all teachers need these skills or only those who deal with high-risk youth?

- **Meaningful rationales** – The ability to provide youth with personalized, meaningful reasons for the behaviour changes requested of them. For example, telling a youth, "Following directions right away is important for keeping a job and earning money" rather than saying, "Do it because I say so."

- **Effective consequences** – The ability to develop an effective system of consequences that will, over time, motivate high-risk youth to decrease the use of antisocial behaviour and increase the use of prosocial skills.

- **Role play and rehearsal** – The ability to find or create opportunities for youth to practice the new prosocial skills that they are being taught.

- **Nonaversive crisis intervention** – The ability to respond appropriate to youth who are defiant or have lost self-control. Responding appropriately means maintaining a calm, positive manner even when the youth is verbally abusive and to praise any approximations of appropriate behaviour that might occur (Tierney et al, 1993).

From the Symposium

Issue #3: How do we create safe school environments?

Virtually all participants said that parents and the larger community must be involved in creating a safe school environment. The school can't do it alone. Because violence begins in the home in some cases, parenting education programs may be an important part of creating safe school cultures. Integrated services – collaboration between all of the agencies that support children and families – is also important. Several participants talked about the need for a community development focus. The school and the community really can't be separated. Improving the school by improving the community is an approach that has many strengths.

There was strong agreement that schools should take a proactive not just a reactive stance. Their focus should be on making sure that violence does not happen rather than on reacting to those incidents that do occur.

Symposium participants identified things that facilitate the creation of safe school environments and things that stand in the way. They grouped these facilitators and barriers into external (within society as a whole) and internal (within the educational system) categories.

External Facilitators

- Increasing recognition that violence in society and in schools is a problem and needs to be addressed.

- Increasing willingness by all agencies to collaborate for the good of children and families.

- Increasing demands that the public education system be accountable.

- Support for a violence-free school by most parents.

- Increasing tendency by schools to give parents a larger role in decision making and to encourage greater parental involvement.

Internal Facilitators

- Early identification of children who are potentially aggressive or violent.
- Willingness by most staff and students to bring about positive change.
- Policies concerning handling of critical and violent incidents.
- Existing programs that have been proven successful such as peer mediation. Resource officer programs, Lions' Quest program.
- Strong administrative support that provides time and resources for violence prevention programs.
- Teachers who can model and teach negotiation and problem-solving skills.

External Barriers

- The media's tendency to glamorize and sensationalize violence.
- Fear of litigation – threats of lawsuits by parents, fear of losing court cases, perception that courts will uphold individual over group rights, perception that the Young Offenders Act lacks "teeth".
- Conflicting social values – some elements within society see aggression as masculine or desirable – some families see the school as an adversary not an ally in the raising of children.
- The changing nature of the family – some families cannot meet their children's emotional and physical needs.

Internal Barriers

- Denial of the reality of violence by school and central office administrators.
- Tendency by staff to see safe schools programs as an "add on" rather than as actions that permeate all aspects of school life.
- The sheer volume of work faced by many teachers.
- Negative student peer pressure – "it's not cool to follow rules".
- Lack of funding and resources.
- Lack of policy.
- Philosophy of school staff may differ – some may be heavily punishment oriented – others may be prevention-oriented.

What Next?

Symposium participants agreed that creating safe school environments should be a high priority for Saskatchewan's educational system. It is an issue worthy of ongoing action and attention.

They identified several different actions that will bring us closer to the goal of violence-free schools. These actions include:

- **Developing and implementing safe schools policies** – A good policy provides both a philosophical foundation and practical guidelines. Several participants said that some type of provincial policy initiative would be more effective than individual boards of education working in isolation.

- **Working with other agencies** – More opportunities are needed to share information with other schools, boards of education and social service agencies about what works and what doesn't. Again, participants talked about the possibility of a province-wide network to facilitate communication and sharing. Many participants emphasized that sharing of information is only the starting point in creating a safe school environment. Collaboration with other agencies through an integrated school-linked services model is the ultimate goal. When agencies work together sharing information and scarce resources, there is greater potential for creating safe schools and for meeting the needs of individual students.

- **Implementing programs that work** – Participants emphasized that we know that programs such as conflict mediation, peer mediation, anger management and social skills development contribute to a safe school environment. However, many teachers and educational administrators don't know how to design and implement these types of programs. They receive little attention in the typical curriculum-focussed teacher education program and are rarely topics at inservice sessions. Some participants said that perhaps Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment should issue "curriculum guides" for these types of programs, just as they do for academic programs. Other participants said that inservice on implementing specific safe schools programs and on the issue of safe schools generally is vital.

Throughout all of their deliberations, participants at the Safe Schools Symposium emphasized the need to work together to achieve school environments that are truly safe and are free of fear, intimidation, humiliation and violence. Violence exists in society as a whole as well as in the school, and so society as a whole must be involved in eliminating violence. The best efforts of schools, parents, communities, business, the media and all the agencies that serve children and families are needed. Together we can make a difference.

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Appendix A

Safe Schools Survey for Students

Sometimes students don't tell their teachers and parents about everything that goes on at school. We are interested in your experience so that we can make our school a place where all students feel safe and secure. You do not have to sign your name to this questionnaire.

How old are you? _____ Are you female or male? _____

How many times have each of the following happened to you during the last year?						
Behaviour	Never	1-3	4-10	11-25	26-50	More than 50
Verbal abuse (name calling, swearing, threats)						
Bullying (picking on you over a period of time)						
Sexual harassment (unwanted comments or touching of a sexual nature)						
Theft of your personal items						
Racist behaviour (comments, threats, violence based on your race)						
Aggressive behaviour (pushing, shoving, tripping, poking, slapping, spitting, etc.)						
Violent behaviour (fighting with the intent to cause physical harm)						
Threats with a weapon (knife, rock, stick, gun, etc.)						

Please answer the following questions about your own behaviour. Please remember that you do not have to sign your name or identify yourself in any way.

My Behaviour	How many times have you done this to a teacher during the past year?	How many times have you done this to another student during the past year?
Verbal abuse (name calling, swearing, threats)		
Bullying (picking on someone over a period of time)		
Sexual harassment (unwanted comments or touching of a sexual nature)		
Theft of personal items		
Racist behaviour (comments, threats, violence based on someone's race)		
Aggressive behaviour (pushing, shoving, tripping, poking, slapping, spitting, etc.)		
Violent behaviour (fighting with the intent to cause physical harm)		
Threats with a weapon (knife, rock, stick, gun, etc.)		

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Questionnaire adapted from one originally developed by The Ottawa Catholic Separate School Board. Used with permission.

Safe Schools Survey for Teachers

How old are you? _____ Are you male or female? _____ What grade do you teach? ____

Behaviour	How many times during the past year has this behaviour been directed at you by a student?	How many times during the past year have you directed this behaviour toward a student?	How many times during the past year have you seen one student direct this type of behaviour toward another student?
Verbal abuse (name calling, swearing, threats)			
Bullying (picking on someone over a period of time)			
Sexual harassment (unwanted comments or touching of a sexual nature)			
Theft of personal items			
Racist behaviour (comments, threats, violence based on a person's race)			
Aggressive behaviour (pushing, shoving, tripping, poking, slapping, spitting, etc.)			
Violent behaviour (fighting with the intent to cause physical harm)			
Threats with a weapon (knife, rock, stick, gun, etc.)			

Questionnaire adapted from one originally developed by The Ottawa Catholic Separate School Board. Used with permission.

APPENDIX B

Saskatchewan School Trustees Association

One Incident is Too Many: Guidelines For Safe Schools

Forum Agenda

Monday, September 19, 1994
Saskatoon Travelodge Hotel

This meeting is organized by the SSTA Research Centre:

- to provide a forum for sharing ideas on creating a safe school environment.
- to seek your input and direction on suggested guidelines for ensuring safe schools.

Agenda: Monday, September 19

9:30 a.m.	Welcome and introductions
9:40	Overview of SSTA report: **One Incident is Too Many: Guidelines For Safe Schools** (copy attached)
10:00	STF perspective: **A Survey of The Abuse of Teachers**
10:20	Regina School Boards Project: Community Committee for Safe Schools
10:40	Discussion: 'Is the elimination of aggression and violence a realistic goal?'
11:40	Reporting
12:00	Lunch (provided)
1:00	Discussion: 'Who should have information regarding Young Offenders? For what purpose?'
1:50	Reporting
2:30	Discussion: 'How do we create a safe school environment?'
3:10	Reporting
3:25	Summary and closing remarks
3:30	Adjourn

APPENDIX C

Participants – Safe Schools Forum

Monday, September 19, 1994

Saskatoon Catholic Schools
Saskatoon S.D. No. 13
Regina Catholic Schools
Regina Public Schools
Moose Jaw S.D. No. 1
Saskatchewan Valley S.D.
North Battleford R.C.S.S.D. No. 16
North Battleford S.D. No. 103
Kindersley S.D. No. 34
Northern Lakes S.D. 64
Prince Albert S.D. No. 3
Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment
Saskatchewan Social Services
Saskatchewan Justice

Loraine Thompson, Loraine Thompson Information Services Ltd.
Barry Bashutski, Saskatchewan School Trustees Association